

“THE MYTH OF INABILITY” – EXPLORING
CHILDREN’S CAPABILITY AND BELONGING AT
PRIMARY SCHOOL THROUGH NARRATIVE
ASSESSMENT.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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(Wansart, 1995, p. 175)

*"It has often been said
there's so much to be read,
you never can cram
all those words in your head.*

*So the writer who breeds
more words than he needs
is making a chore
for the reader who reads..."*

*That's why my belief is
the briefer the brief is,
the greater the sigh
of the reader's relief is.*

*And that's why your books
have such power and strength.
You publish with shorth!
(Shorth is better than length.)"*

Dr Seuss (quoted from Morgan & Morgan, 1995)

“This book damn nearly drove me mad. I started it in 1958 and doodled with it for four years. I don’t think I could go through it all again, therefore, as this will be my first and last novel, I would like to thank those who helped me get it finished.” (Milligan, 1965, p. 6)

Abstract

This research is about teaching, learning and assessment. It is about the belonging of disabled children at school. In New Zealand schools, the term 'inclusive education' is associated with the idea of disability. This research moves away from using the term 'inclusive education', towards the term 'belonging'. The intention is to direct focus on all children and on community.

The national New Zealand Curriculum guides all teaching and learning decisions and requires that every child receives quality learning experiences that enable them to achieve (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 39). New Zealand education policies and documents place children at the centre of assessment processes, where it is intended that their learning progress is recognised and ongoing learning trajectories planned (Ministry of Education, 2011a, 2014, 2016a). Assessment is understood to be critical to quality teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Quality teaching is challenged by assessment practices that fail to account for the learning and progress of some disabled children who are invisible in assessment data. Children may become marginalised within the rich curriculum available to their peers if their learning potential is unrecognised and unsupported (Florian, 2014b; Morton, 2012; Slee, 2011).

This qualitative research project explores the potential of narrative assessment to recognise the capability and learning potential of every child and their belonging in the curriculum and their school community. Narrative assessments incorporate multiple voices to capture and document teaching and learning in authentic contexts, combining observation, recording, interpretation and analysis (Carr & Lee, 2012; Gunn & de Vocht van Alphen, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2009c). They are used formatively to support ongoing praxis, and are personalised to celebrate each child's strengths and motivations (William, 2011a). The research aims to inform education policy and teaching practice so all children are recognised as capable learners within collaborative and equitable assessment processes.

The project took place in a primary school in urban New Zealand, involving children, families and educators. A Disability Studies in Education (DSE) framework is used to explain disability as socially, politically and culturally constructed (Gabel, 2005; Mills & Morton, 2013). Critical ethnography was selected as the qualitative approach for this

work, as it supported bringing marginalised voices to the fore to unmask discriminatory and repressive practice, and is a means of invoking social consciousness and educational change within broader structures of social power and control (Thomas, 1993). Storytelling is a feature of narrative assessment and is recognised as an effective approach to teaching and learning which can provoke change at a personal and systemic level (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The routine inclusion of photographs, artwork, pictures and symbols as well as written text within narrative assessments links to broader concepts of literacy and aligns with the theory of visual ethnography (Kliwer, 2008b; Pink, 2007; Rose, 2012).

This research challenged “the myth of inability”, bringing teams together to show that a formative approach to narrative assessment recognised the capability and learning success of every child by incorporating the voices of children and those who know them well in responsive, effective classroom pedagogy (Lundy, 2007; Skidmore, 2002; Smith, 2015; Wansart, 1995, p. 175). Narrative assessment enables teachers as caring and professional leaders of classroom learning to support children’s belonging within the vision, values, principles and learning areas of the New Zealand Curriculum (Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 1995).

Acknowledgements



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Chapter 1: Introduction

The years where the teachers and teacher's aides have taken the time to get to know her and understand her, and help her make friends, they're the years when she's learned the most I think. There're so many things she can do but the teachers don't always see it, it's not always obvious to them, you've got to look for it ... She doesn't do the class tests so they don't really notice what she can do ... Because she can't do reading without help, it's like some of them think she can't do anything. She's got a teacher's aide in art. She doesn't need any help in art.

(McIlroy, 2006)

These comments were made by a mother reflecting on the experiences of her twelve year old daughter at her local intermediate school. They raise important ideas about the role of relationships within teaching and learning. Her comments suggest that when children are absent within classroom assessment processes, their skills and capabilities may go unrecognised (Morton, 2012). This could mean active participation and learning for some children is less valued than for other children (Ballard, 2013c; Biklen & Burke, 2006). When teachers do not have a clear picture of a child's learning, it is difficult to construct authentic teaching and learning goals (Wansart, 1995; Wiliam, 2011a).

This scenario suggests the choices educators make around assessment may impact on children's learning and participatory opportunities, and on how capability is recognised and understood. This research explored the formative use of narrative assessment in relation to children's belonging within teaching and learning programmes, focusing on the experiences of disabled children.

Introduction and research context

In this chapter I discuss the rationale for this study. I outline key historical aspects of New Zealand's education legislation and policy leading to the current educational context. I explore the concepts of disability and inclusion, and introduce ideas about teaching and learning. I describe key documents that are used to inform and contextualise this work. I position the work within the area of Disability Studies in Education, and identify the

epistemology, theoretical perspectives and methodological approach used. I identify key language and give a description of the thesis layout.

What brings me to this place?

In 2008 I became involved in a Ministry of Education project exploring Narrative Assessment through the University of Canterbury (Ministry of Education, 2009c). This learning opportunity created a lightbulb moment in my teaching by providing a means for children who were mostly absent from school assessment practices to be recognised as successful learners belonging in the New Zealand Curriculum alongside their peers (Ministry of Education, 2007). The simplicity of narrative was able to capture the complexity of teaching. Alongside others, I explored the power of teaching as inquiry within a narrative assessment approach, which enabled me to explore the concept of capability by aligning theory, teacher pedagogy, authentic evidence of differentiation and reflexivity within the teaching and learning process. My understanding of teaching and learning draws particularly on the work of Ballard (2004a, 2004b, 2012) and Monchinski (2008, 2010) who have helped me to recognise social justice and an ethic of care as central to teaching and learning.

Rationale

This research is a response to a problem in teaching practice where not all children are recognised as capable. It is a thesis about teaching and learning within the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). It is specifically about assessment in relation to disabled children. There is a lack of information about assessment outcomes for disabled children and a pedagogical gap in ways teachers can recognise authentic learning (Education Review Office, 2012b, 2012d, 2012a; Guerin, 2015; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014). The Curriculum requires that every child, including disabled children, receives quality learning experiences that enable them to achieve (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 39). Teaching pedagogy that responds well to diversity amongst children is challenged by standardised assessment approaches that fail to account for the learning and progress of some children. Some teachers may feel they are not confident to meet the learning needs of all the children in their class. Some children may become marginalised within the rich

curriculum available to their peers, as their learning potential is unrecognised and unsupported (Florian, 2014b; Morton, 2012; Slee, 2011).

This project took place in a New Zealand primary school and explored narrative assessment within the context of everyday teaching and learning practices. It is hoped that combining current teaching practice with education theory may help support children, educators and families to make sense of the complexity of assessment practice for disabled children (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012). The research is embedded in sociocultural ways of working within a Disability Studies in Education framework, which recognises that knowledge is socially constructed at the intersection of culture and experience (Connor, 2008; Gaffney, 2014; Gallagher, 2008; Geertz, 1973; Luluvein, 2010).

Research questions

The following research questions are identified:

1. How can narrative assessment influence our understandings of assessment theory and the consequences of assessment?
2. How can narrative assessment support inclusive practice?
3. How does the narrative assessment process impact on teaching and learning?
4. How do families make sense of narrative assessments about their child?
5. How do children make sense of narrative assessments?

The purpose of this research is to support inclusive practice where children are consulted about their learning, where teachers feel confident, where children feel a sense of belonging and achievement at school, where families are valued and where school communities work collaboratively (Alton-Lee, 2003; Noddings, 2012; Skidmore, 2002).

Education within a political context

A national education system was introduced in New Zealand in 1877, making education secular, free for children aged five to fifteen years and compulsory for children from the ages of seven till thirteen (Simon, 1994; Wills & Rosenbaum, 2014). A separate system of special education developed from compulsory schooling in 1894 and continued largely unchallenged until the late 1970s, when discussions about social justice and human rights

led to conversations about discrimination and inequality (Neilson, 2005; Stephenson, 2014; Stephenson & Thomson, 2014).

Formal implementation of neoliberal policies in education began with the Picot Report (Neilson, 2005; New Zealand Government, 1988). This was followed by changes to section 8 of the Education Act 1989, which meant that for the first time, disabled children had the right to attend their local school enshrined in law (Morton & McMenamin, 2011; New Zealand Government, 1989; Wills, 2006). Change in 1996 followed the implementation of Special Education 2000 (SE2000), the Ministry of Education's national policy that framed education for disabled children at school. The overall goal was "to implement ... a world-class system of inclusive education which enables all students to access educational opportunities of equal quality" (Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 5). SE2000 policy provides varying levels of contestable resource through a multi-tiered framework. It is expected that children who qualify for funding through the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) will require high levels of support throughout their school life (Education Review Office, 2015b; Ministry of Education, 2014). Qualifying for ORS requires a lengthy paper application process described by educators and families as soul destroying and demoralising, particularly when repeated applications continue to be unsuccessful (Brown, 2014a; MacArthur et al., 2005; Macartney, 2011; 2014; Macartney & Morton, 2013; Mara, 2014; Mitchell, 1995). 1.1% of the total school population in New Zealand is supported by the ORS (Education Counts, 2015). This competitive and individualistic deficit-based process challenges the democratic and socially just aims of inclusive education (Ballard, 2013c; Gordon & Morton, 2008; Rutherford, 2011). The children who are the focus of this research are all funded by the ORS.

New Zealand has been recognised as a nation that quickly embraced neoliberal policies, measuring the cost effectiveness of outputs rather than outcomes (Morton, Higgins, MacArthur, & Phillips, 2013). Children became 'products' and families became 'stakeholders' (Ballard, 2012; Macartney, 2014). For schools to be successful in the market, means judging whether children are a good or poor investment, largely measured through simplistic approaches to assessment (Austin & Hickey, 2008; Black-Hawkins, 2010; Codd, 2005a; Gladstone, 2014; Morton et al., 2013; Slee, 2011). Assessment practices become a

threat to inclusive education, as some disabled children's assessment outcomes are not recognised as adding value to how a school is perceived in the market. This research is a pushback against the harmful effects of neoliberal education policies, which continue to damage the teaching profession and ignore children's rights (Ballard, 2012; Ballard, 2013a; Codd, 2005a, 2005b; Ministry of Education, 1996a; New Zealand Government, 1989).

Current policy focus

SE2000 remains the policy currently informing practice (Ministry of Education, 1996a). Through subsequent Ministry of Education policy statements and initiatives such as Success for All (Ministry of Education, 2014) and the Ministry of Education Statement of Intent (2012, 2014a), the Government is able to focus on aspects of teaching, learning and school administration that require attention. While Ministry of Education documents clearly state that inclusive education is a priority, there is no policy document that describes pedagogical support for schools to implement inclusive practices (Booth, 2003; Kearney & Kane, 2006; Ministry of Education, 1996a, 2013c, 2014, 2015a; New Zealand Government, 1989). There is tension as schools work towards being inclusive and experience a perceived lack of resource to support such (Brown, 2014b; Guerin, 2015; Mara, 2014; Wills, Macartney, & Brown, 2014). Because SE2000 awards resource to individual children, schools may struggle to feel responsible for the teaching and learning of children who receive support from the Ministry of Education (Wills & Rosenbaum, 2014). Similarly, funding delivered in block grants to schools such as the Special Education Grant (SEG) and Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) is not allocated towards the systemic improvement of teacher practice or to encourage principals to change their school culture. Such grants operate by supporting a particular child through targeted resourcing to fix the 'problem' (Macartney, 2011).

Inclusion

In this section I describe some important ideas around disability, inclusion and inclusive education.

Disability

Education research offers varied definitions of disability and of inclusion. The Ministry of Education defines inclusive education as being “the participation and achievement of all learners. Inclusive schools believe in all students becoming capable, connected life-long learners and work towards this within The New Zealand Curriculum” (Ministry of Education, 2015c, p. 1). The idea of “all students becoming capable” is challenged by this thesis, which recognises the inherent capabilities of all students. There is no criteria to be met before students are acknowledged as capable.

Disability can be thought about in terms of a ‘medical model’ and a ‘social model’. The language around such is confusing. We can think about a model as emerging from a theory and a theory as emerging from a paradigm or a way of thinking (Gabel & Peters, 2004). The medical model of disability associates disability with deficit and disease. A person is considered to need treatment or to be ‘fixed up’ to control them, or to make them more normal in the eyes of society. Attaching labels and diagnoses to people are aspects of the medical model which are dominant in education and in medical practice and reinforce the notion of ‘other’ as in not fitting the norm (Macartney, 2007). People who fall outside normalcy may be blamed for their ‘flaws’ and made aware they are a burden on society (Connor & Gabel, 2013). Within the medical model, education for disabled children is largely about remediation and fixing or changing children to make them ‘more normal’ (Carrington et al., 2012; MacArthur, 2009).

The ‘social model’ of disability is not about an impaired body, but about the experience of living in a society that recognises some people as ‘abnormal’ and then fails to respond to or support them. “Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have” (Ministry of Health, 2001, p. 1). Political action is required to remove the barriers to create a fair and just society (Ballard, 2012; Carrington et al., 2012). A social model approach to disability does not deny the challenge of impairment effects but recognises these as part of a person’s identity rather than encompassing the whole of who they are (Tregaskis, 2008).

The social/medical model can be understood as a binary - disabled/able-bodied; normal/abnormal. A disability studies approach rejects binary divisions by exposing their unnatural and oppressive hierarchy (Iravelles, 2012; MacArthur, Sharp, Kelly, & Gaffney, 2007). How impairment affects a person is not static but depends on the relationships and experiences that enable strengths and capabilities to be revealed. Or, stated more simply, “if you are interested in seeing another’s competence, it helps to look for it” (Biklen & Kliever, 2006, p. 184). From a deficit medical model, communication differences are often presumed to indicate intellectual and other deficiencies in the person. If someone does not speak, it is often assumed that their ability to think is diminished (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Kasa-Hendrickson, 2005). Supporting expressive communication through switching, sign language, picture exchange systems or talking machines enables the right to voice to be enacted and capability to become visible (Boshier, 2005; Lundy, 2007; Office of the Children's Commission, 2016; Smith & Taylor, 2000).

The social model has been useful in shifting the focus of disability from individual deficit to a social construction that occurs when society disables and discriminates through structures and processes that exclude (Gabel, 2001; Peters, Gabel, & Symeonidou, 2009). Mara (2014) suggests the increasing pervasion of visual and social media reinforce conformity and stereotypical views of normality, which narrows focus on the individual and continually highlights differences as deficits.

[The Disability Studies in Education lens](#)

The theoretical perspectives in this study are drawn from Disability Studies in Education (DSE), where the complexity of disability is explored through the interaction of culture and society (Connor, 2008; Gabel, 2005). Through a critique of dominant social and cultural constructions of normalcy, DSE directs attention to issues of social justice and equity (Rioux, 2014; Thienpondt, 2012). DSE prioritises the marginalised voices of disabled people (Solis & Connor, 2008). It combines theory and practice, explores the relationships that enable participation, and attends to meaningful change to support inclusive practice (Bogdan & Taylor, 1989; Goodley, 2013; Iravelles, 2012; Morton, 2012; Taylor, 2008; van Hove et al., 2012).

Understanding inclusion

To understand inclusion we must also understand exclusion (Ballard, 2013c; Kearney, 2009). Exclusion is experienced when barriers prevent full participation, belonging and enactment of human rights. In educational settings, exclusion occurs when children, families and teachers are assimilated into environments that are not based on socially just ways of being in the world. Sometimes in schools, a fear of difference creates a desire to make everyone the same. Sometimes school attendance for some children is denied or comes with contingencies (Gunn et al., 2004; Mara, 2014; Wills et al., 2014). To understand and overcome exclusion and discrimination requires a critique of the structures and processes that powerfully maintain oppressive practices. This means pedagogy is critiqued through a lens that focuses on social justice, democracy, belonging and community. Without critical pedagogy, the dominant discourse may come to be accepted as normal and discriminatory practice remains unchallenged (Ballard, 2013c; Freire, 1998).

Inclusion is not about ramps and self-opening doors. It is not about labels dispensed by those in powerful positions, or about ignoring impairment, or about pretending we are all the same (Brown, 2014b). Inclusion is about morality and the enactment of human rights. It is a precursor to democracy and requires a political commitment in terms of creating and enacting socially just policies and practices (Apple, 1999; Biklen & Kliever, 2006; Slee, 2011). Inclusion means every person is of equal value. Cognitive, emotional, physical and sensory differences are understood as part of natural human variation (Booth, 2003; Brown, 2014a; Connor & Gabel, 2013; Taylor, 2008). Inclusion means society welcomes uncertainty, diversity and complexity (Gabel, 2001; Macartney, 2011; Slee, 2011).

Sustainable inclusion may only be achieved when we have a social and political environment that is focused on the idea of an inclusive society in which equity and social justice are the predominant goals, and notions of caring and interdependence take precedence over selfishness, materialism and market competition.

(Ballard, 2013c, p. 771).

In both simple and complex terms, inclusion is about the quality of human relationships and about how we treat each other (Ballard, 2013b; Skidmore, 2002).

Inclusive education

Understandings and beliefs about inclusive education have significant impact on teaching practices and learning experiences. Teachers who base their practice on knowing the learner recognise the importance of establishing reciprocal, respectful relationships with children, family and whanau (Gunn et al., 2004; Skidmore, 2002).

Challenge to inclusive education

Achieving the SE2000 goal of “a world-class inclusive education system” is made difficult by an inadequacy of resources and strategies to implement the policy (Gordon & Morton, 2008; Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 5). Inclusive education is challenged by facilities that offer ‘special education’, as this sends a message that some children need something different. Teachers may be challenged to feel responsible and confident to teach all children if they believe a ‘special’ alternative is preferable.

Defining inclusive education

An inclusive classroom teacher has been described as someone who places the child at the centre of learning, recognises difference, questions the use of labels, promotes child voice, maintains children’s dignity, advocates for children, is both a teacher and a learner, listens, and resists practices perceived as oppressive or harmful to children (Kluth, 2003).

However, inclusive education is not about a checklist that, once ticked off, means a school or a teacher is inclusive; it is an ongoing process requiring quality relationships and critical pedagogy. The points noted are perhaps related to quality teaching for all children, rather than tips for teaching those labelled ‘disabled’ or ‘difficult’.

Writing a precise definition of inclusive education is complex when multiple aspects demand attention. Inclusive practice requires a whole school approach to participation, based on beliefs about social justice and human rights as a precursor to democratic society (Apple, 1999; Ballard, 2004a; Laluvein, 2010; Solis & Connor, 2008). Inclusive education requires that all children are cared about and recognised as capable learners (Monchinski, 2010; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995). It requires valuing diversity and difference and creating schools where quality teaching and learning for all is the focus (Alton-Lee, 2003;

Artiles, 2003; Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Florian, 2014a; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Slee, 2011).

Documents supporting children's rights to education

Education is a basic human right. Education supports children's cultural, civil and social rights and is critical to developing their potential and capability to access and enjoy the full range of human rights (Human Rights Commission, 1993; Smith, 2015). Disabled children in New Zealand have the same rights to education as their peers, these rights being enshrined by international statements and conventions. New Zealand is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007), and the Salamanca Statement (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1994), which established children's rights to equal opportunity and full participation in their local schools and in their communities. In New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi supports the rights of Maori children to meaningful education through the key principles of protection, partnership, participation and consultation (Orange, 2013). Maori children, and particularly disabled Maori children, are marginalised in the current education system, which focuses on individualisation and fails to value important Maori principles of collaboration and family participation (Berryman & Macfarlane, 2011; Mahuika, Berryman, & Bishop, 2011). The New Zealand Disability Strategy (Ministry of Social Development, 2016) envisions a fully inclusive New Zealand society where the lives of all disabled people are valued and full participation is prioritised.

The role of assessment

Assessment is seen as "the key to improving the quality of education for all learners" (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014, p. 12). For many children in New Zealand, the education system works well and assessment outcomes support the Ministry of Education's current policies and practices (Hattie, 2012; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). However, the gap between high and low achievers continues to rise (Nusche, Laveault, MacBeath, & Santiago, 2012; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010) and has become

increasingly obvious in primary schools since the introduction of national standards and the resultant public labelling of children (Murray, 2013; New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011; Thrupp & White, 2013). Some disabled children are excluded from some assessment processes as the assessment task may be thought of as irrelevant, too difficult, inaccessible or at times not even considered. However the interconnectedness of teaching and assessment means invisibility within assessment increases the likelihood of children's invisibility within teaching and learning programmes in the classroom (New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011; Nusche et al., 2012). Current assessment practices in New Zealand primary schools do not enable many disabled children to reveal their capabilities, meaning many disabled children experience discrimination within teaching and learning programmes (Kliwer, 2008b; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014; Morton, McMenamin, Moore, & Molloy, 2012; Wansart, 1995).

New Zealand Curriculum

The New Zealand Curriculum is a nationally mandated framework for children in years one to thirteen which signals learning children should experience and why those experiences are considered important (Hipkins, 2010a; Hipkins, Bolstad, Boyd, & McDowall, 2014). The first half of the Curriculum document contains future focused education outcomes and begins with the vision of “young people who are competent and creative, connected and actively involved” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 4). It also includes principles which embody beliefs about what is important in the school curriculum; values which include information about how each learning area can contribute to a broad and general education; and effective pedagogy which concerns teacher actions that support children to learn. It includes information about assessment outlining the purpose and characteristics of effective practice. It includes key competencies which are described as capabilities for living and lifelong learning. These are thinking, using language symbols and texts, managing self, relating to others and participating and contributing. The competencies are intended to integrate knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, and are embedded within the learning areas, often through interactions with others (Hipkins, 2006, 2010a). The first half of the Curriculum also includes an overview of the eight learning areas and how they contribute to a “broad, general education” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 16).

The second half of the Curriculum includes a framework for the eight subject or learning areas which are presented in levels of learning outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2007). Level One is the first level, where each child belongs when they start school, and Level Eight contains the most complex learning outcomes expected to be achieved at the end of secondary schooling. The learning areas guide pedagogy and assessment and include achievement objectives which are considered to increase in difficulty and complexity as levels progress. There is no recognition in the Curriculum that learning is not a linear process and that children may work across multiple levels.

Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning

Research has shown that the most important factor in how well children progress at school is the quality of the teacher (Alton-Lee, 2003; Wiliam, 2011a). This means professional development for teachers to support ongoing teaching and learning is critical. In recent times, teachers have been bombarded with multiple innovations and expectations and often have little time to embed new learning. William (2011a) suggests a lifetime is insufficient to master the job of teaching but notes it can be useful when teachers recognise their failures. “The only teachers who think they are successful are those who have low expectations of the students ... the best teachers fail all the time because they have such high aspirations for what the students can achieve” (Wiliam, 2011a, p. 29).

For disabled children, learning has often been characterised by low expectations and limited authentic learning opportunities. In New Zealand, research suggests many teachers have struggled to find relevance of the New Zealand Curriculum for children whom they believed would never progress beyond Level One (Morton, Rietveld, Guerin, McIlroy, & Duke, 2012). Low expectations may reflect a deficit view of disability and an inability to see children as skilled and capable learners (Moore, Molloy, Morton, & Davis, 2008; Morton, McMenamin, et al., 2012). When the Curriculum is understood to involve meaningful interactions between teachers and children and amongst children, the idea that learning is collaborative and co-constructed means everyone has the opportunity to demonstrate

capability (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Relationships are based on partnership and on a pedagogy of listening (Macartney, 2012; Rinaldi, 2006). This means children need a means to communicate effectively so they can be listened to and participate. "Opportunities to learn do not exist for learners who cannot take advantage of them" (Moss, Girard, & Greeno, 2008, p. 6).

Enacting the classroom curriculum requires a moral and ethical commitment to valuing each child so that their participation and belonging is visibly prioritized (Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 2012; Wansart, 1995). Teachers constantly adapt and differentiate their praxis so that Curriculum objectives are linked to culturally appropriate, authentic teaching and learning goals (Macfarlane, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2007; Morton, McMenamin, et al., 2012; Skidmore, 2002). Teaching can be understood as creative, imaginative and responsive inquiry with all children within the curriculum.

Teaching is often thought about as a technical activity rather than a profession that is informed by and informs research. When teaching is understood to involve research and inquiry, the importance of critical reflection and evidence-based decision-making is highlighted (Deppeler, 2013; Lather, 1986). Teaching as inquiry begins with teachers inquiring into the effects of their teaching on their children. Inquiry informs and is informed by pedagogy, teaching and assessment practice. Inquiry has deep links to teacher reflexivity and can be understood as a cyclical process. As children become more skilled at thinking about their own learning and talking about this with their teachers, teachers become better informed and are more able to meet their children's diverse learning needs (Absolum, Flockton, Hattie, Hipkins, & Reid, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2007).

Assessment

Assessment is an ongoing process that arises from the interactions between teaching and learning. "Good teaching is inseparable from good assessing" (Wiggins, 1992, p. 32). Assessment enables a focus on teaching, learning and children's achievement in the classroom, and at school and systems levels (Absolum et al., 2009). Assessment can also be thought about as inquiry, where teachers and children work together to explore learning, and to set future learning goals.

In New Zealand, the government agencies responsible for educational assessment are the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, which have responsibility for both accountability and improvement functions (Ministry of Education, 2017a; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010). In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on public reporting of school data and on using this as a driver for raising children's achievement. Raising competitive stakes through assessment means the focus turns to performance and proficiency over process and learning (Curcic, Gabela, Zeitlina, Cribaro-DiFattaa, & Glarnera, 2011; Flockton, 2012; Morton, 2012; Murray, 2013). High stakes assessment challenges the essence of democratic teaching and learning communities and perpetuates inequality as some children become marginalised within assessment practices.

Narrative assessment

Narrative assessment was developed in New Zealand to support "the early construction of learner identity" in response to the understanding "that learning is distributed over social and cultural practices" (Carr & Lee, 2012, p. 6). The approach was developed within Te Whāriki - the New Zealand early childhood Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996b), and recognised the interaction of sociocultural factors and the principles of the Curriculum. The intersection of culture, experience and relationships created opportunities for narrative assessment to be explored within primary and secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2009c, 2010b). Narrative assessment is a democratic approach to teaching and learning that can strengthen a child's belonging within their class, their school and their community (Bourke & Mentis, 2014; Carr & Lee, 2012; Ministry of Education, 2009c; Morton & McMenamin, 2011; Morton, McMenamin, et al., 2012; Wiliam, 2011a).

Assessment in New Zealand for disabled children

How assessment information is gathered and how it is subsequently used has an impact on children's motivation to learn and on their perceived capability (Absolum et al., 2009). In 2011, the Education Review Office asked schools to complete a questionnaire about the progress of their disabled children. Most schools did not report on children's learning gains, leading the Review Office to suggest schools lacked evidence of the achievement of

disabled children (Education Review Office, 2012a; Human Rights Commission, 2012). The Ministry of Education's Statement of Intent for 2012–2017 (2012) prioritises the improvement of education outcomes for four groups of children, one of which was 'learners with special education needs'. The Ministry of Education required evidence of improved accountability and achievement for all of the groups except for those with special education needs. It is difficult to understand how learning outcomes can be improved if children's achievement is not valued.

Many teachers are challenged to make sense of assessment for some disabled children on a day-to-day basis. Approaches that recognise the capability of children who may be working within Level One of the New Zealand Curriculum are not widely recognised, and the learning gains made by these children are mostly invisible within mandated national standards testing data (Guerin, 2015; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014). At the time of writing, resources related to assessment are being reviewed for the Ministry of Education's Special Education website (Ministry of Education, 2017b). This research recognises a lack of information to support teachers as they think about assessment for some disabled children in their classes.

New Zealand research related to disability and narrative assessment

There is considerable research in New Zealand that describes the educational experiences of disabled children at school (Kearney, 2009; MacArthur & Kelly, 2004; Mara, 2014; Picken, 2012; Rutherford, 2008; Wills et al., 2014). There are many examples of research that explores narrative assessment within early childhood settings (Carr, 2009; Carr & Lee, 2012; Carr & Peters, 2005; Dunn, 2004; Gunn & de Vocht van Alphen, 2010; Hatherly & Sands, 2002; Margrain, 2010). There are some New Zealand studies that explore narrative assessment with disabled children in early childhood settings (Williamson, Cullen, & Lepper, 2006). Picken (2012) and Guerin (2015) explore the use of narrative assessment with young disabled students in secondary schools. A small number of studies have explored narrative assessment in primary schools (Smith, Davis, & Molloy, 2012). Narrative assessment is a little explored approach within New Zealand schools. Recognition of its potential resulted in a research project funded by the Ministry of Education in 2007 and 2008 to develop 'Curriculum Exemplars for Students with Special Education Needs' and a

book titled 'Narrative Assessment A Guide for Teachers' (Ministry of Education, 2009c, 2010b). The project was based on sociocultural ways of working and involved collaboration between teachers, families and academic staff as they worked together to investigate and reflect on the potential of narrative assessment to support inclusive practice in primary and secondary schools within the New Zealand Curriculum (Burr, 1995). The resources were created to support ongoing professional development; however the Ministry of Education did not pursue recommendations resulting from the project review (Bourke & Mentis, 2010).

Key documents supporting this research

This research sits within a human rights framework and is concerned with issues of social justice and democracy. Policy and law are vital prerequisites for inclusion, but they do not guarantee that schools will be inclusive (Kearney & Kane, 2006; Wills & Rosenbaum, 2014). Human rights do not determine attitudes and philosophies; nor do they result in the pedagogical support schools require so teachers can confidently teach all children in their classrooms. This research explores narrative assessment within a wider inclusive education focus, and attends in particular to Wansart's (1995) analysis of teaching as a way of knowing about learning; the Ministry of Education's Position Paper on Assessment (2011b); and Skidmore's (2002) discourse of inclusion to support data analysis. Important ideas attend to children's learning potential and the connections between authentic assessment, teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2011b; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995).

Important ideas from key research used to explore research data

All children have the ability to learn and their capability is revealed when they are given the opportunity to talk about their learning and contribute to their assessments (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Biklen & Kliever, 2006; Wansart, 1995). When stories about children's learning include multiple voices, they have the potential to inform teaching pedagogy (Carr & Lee, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The narrative assessment approach is aligned to collaborative ways of working, and teaching practice can demonstrate socially just ways of teaching as narratives respond to the strengths and capabilities of all children (Morton,

2012; Wansart, 1995). Quality assessment positions children at the centre of all teaching and learning decisions. These decisions are based on authentic, respectful relationships and meaningful interactions (Ministry of Education, 2011b). The relationships between teachers and children are as critical as the relationships between teaching and learning within the classroom (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2011b; Noddings, 1995; Noddings, 2012). These ideas about assessment are explored alongside Skidmore's discourse of inclusion (2002). Skilled teachers share and benefit from the knowledge of families, classmates, the children themselves, other educators, and professionals who may visit occasionally, to develop deep knowledge of children and use this to engineer the active participation of every child in the classroom curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2011b; Skidmore, 2002). Teachers know they are learners alongside their children and as teachers reflect on their practice, they recognise opportunities to enrich learning experiences for their children (Bourke, 2006; Wansart, 1995). Skidmore suggests that difficulties children may have in learning reflect insufficiently responsive presentation of the curriculum (2002). Teachers who skilfully adapt and differentiate the curriculum enable all children to participate successfully. As teacher confidence in assessment pedagogy increases and teachers seek evidence of learning from a range of sources, a more accurate response supports ongoing improvements in teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2011b; Skidmore, 2002). This research explores the visibility of shared learning in narrative assessments through theoretical lenses.

Methodological approaches of this research

This study is concerned with the impact of assessment on children's learning opportunities (Human Rights Commission, 2012). It is therefore important that methodological approaches enabled inclusive research approaches and included multiple voices, particularly the voices of children (Smith, 2015; Soto & Swadener, 2005). It is hoped research outcomes may inform inclusive teaching practice (Florian, 2014b; Skidmore, 2002; Slee, 2013).

The approach to understanding knowledge in this research is social constructionism. This suggests no fixed knowledge waiting to be discovered but rather seeks to uncover reality within a social context based on relationships (Crotty, 1998). The theoretical approach, or the philosophy that informs the methodology and provides context is critical theory. Theory and practice are connected so that new knowledge may be generated and spaces created for change. A critical researcher is committed to advocating for those who may be marginalised or in less powerful situations. Critical theory enables the range of competing discourses confronting teachers to be exposed. It acknowledges times where inclusive practice becomes empty rhetoric as resources and supports are inadequate to create classrooms where belonging and success are possible for all children. A priority in this work is listening to the voices of the disabled children who may not speak, but may have much to say about their learning (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015; Soto & Swadener, 2005; Veck, 2009).

Qualitative research methodology is considered most appropriate to deep exploration of research questions. The particular approach used is critical ethnography, which seeks to reduce marginalising and repressive political influences that lead to unjust social domination of some members of society (Anderson, 1989; Carspecken, 2001; Thomas, 1993). Visual ethnography uses photographs to provide another layer of understanding within a cultural context (Pink, 2007; Pink, 2012; Rose, 2012). It is important that the disabled children at the centre of this research have meaningful access to assessments written about their learning. These children read pictures as text, hence the importance of visuals in this work (Kliwer, 2008b; Pink, 2004).

Current state – a challenge to teaching praxis

The Education Review Office identified a need to support teachers, particularly in relation to strategies for effective inclusion for ‘students with special education needs’, differentiating the curriculum and ways to monitor progress within Level One of the New Zealand Curriculum (Education Review Office, 2015b). At the time of writing, a Ministry of Education review process had reported that the current Special Education system is unsustainable and avenues for change within current systems were being explored.

Changes within the sector were to be implemented during 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2016f).

Equal rights to quality teaching demand recognition of individual strengths and needs. The current system of supporting disabled children's learning alongside their peers is challenged in theory and practice by Ministry of Education policy that supports children's separation from their peers, limits schools' access to meaningful professional development and manages degrading and competitive funding support processes (Mara, 2014; McIlroy, 2006).

Language

Guskey (2002) states that ideas are more important than the vocabulary we use, and that as educators and researchers debate the "war of words", precious time is lost from the all-important work that needs to be done. Conversely scholars within DSE stress the importance of scrutinising the language we use in research and in education (Ainscow, Forlin, & Slee, 2008; Goodley, 2011). Language does matter. It is informed by and informs how we assign cultural meaning (Ballard, 2004b). Language reflects our understandings and our beliefs; it reflects a historical perspective and a theoretical paradigm (Carrington et al., 2012; Graham & Macartney, 2012). Language can exclude because it is inaccessible, because it lacks thought, or because it is used by someone in power to create layers of differential value. Language labels carry an administrative function in schools and are often necessary in relation to assessment and to gaining support for learning. Labels used carelessly can stigmatise, hurt and exclude. Some children become identified by their labels 'the Downs kid', 'the ORS students', and the children can then become separated from their peers and potentially from the regular classroom curriculum (Graham & Macartney, 2012; McIlroy, 2006; Slee, 2011).

The range of documents and policies sourced for this research project use the terms disability, impairment, inclusion and special education in different ways. Sometimes the word inclusive is used to describe what I would recognise as exclusive. The words student, learner and child are also used interchangeably, as are narrative assessment and learning stories. When referring to documents I will respect the language used within that writing.

Sometimes the way a word is used has challenged my understanding and forced to me to reflect on the way language content, context and intent can be used to respect and to free, as well as to marginalise and harm. It is therefore necessary to clarify my use and understanding of potentially confusing terms within this work. In this thesis, the word Curriculum refers to the NZC; and curriculum refers to all classroom learning that includes the content from the NZC. Teachers use the NZC to guide the development of their classroom curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Capability and competence

Within the literature the terms 'capability' and 'competence' are often used synonymously in relation to ability (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2011b, 2014; Wansart, 1995). In this work, I refer to children as 'capable' to represent the notion of potential and of ongoing abilities to be revealed and extended over time (Hipkins, 2013). All children are capable, and teachers work with children and their families to recognise and build on capabilities to enable successful learning through the curriculum. I recognise the term 'competent' to be more aligned with narrow notions of achievement and norm referenced ways of approaching learning, teaching and assessment.

Disability/disabled

I choose to use the term 'disabled child'. This is consistent with the preference of DSE, and of the international disabled persons movement, and emerges from social model thinking (Goodley, 2011; Macartney, 2007; Thomas, 2004; Tregaskis, 2002). Oliver states "our disabilities are essential parts of self to be affirmed and celebrated, not denied or relegated to an appendage, and as such we demand to be called disabled people" (1992, p. 21).

Placing the word 'disabled' first, recognises that children with impairments are disabled and discriminated against when they live in a society that does not respond to their needs, does not treat them equally and does not acknowledge diversity as a regular and valued aspect of humanity (Ruggles Gere, 2005; Smith, Gallagher, Owen, & Skrtic, 2009).

I acknowledge a child's impairment and the impact of this on their way of being in the world. I do not consider impairment a discriminatory term; however, discrimination because of impairment makes a child disabled. Discrimination, lack of understanding and

restrictions placed on disabled people by those in power who make judgements about deficit and incompetence, may be considerably more challenging than the impairment effects (Gabel, 2001). As Brugemann et al. state “impairment is a physical difference ... disability is what society makes of that impairment” (Brueggemann, Feldman, White, Dunn, Heiferman, & Cheu, 2001, pp. 372-373).

Alternatively, people first language refers to ‘the child with a disability’ rather than ‘the disabled child’. The aim of people first language is to respect the person first and to not focus on the disability (Snow, 2013). This does not mean disability is not acknowledged, but rather disability is a valued quality of the individual alongside other qualities (Carrington & MacArthur, 2012). Sullivan states “excusing oneself as a person with a disability, indicates an implicit acceptance of the able-bodied hegemony which defines people as flawed and inferior”(1991, p. 256).

Use of the words disability and disabled emerge from thinking about justice and equity. I recognise that my values are aligned with how I use language but that I am unaware of the values others hold in relation to the language they use. Unpacking language alongside others may reveal a perspective different to that obtained only by reading. Because listening to a range of voices is important in this research, I talked with families about ways their children were labelled or described. A range of responses included “she’s disabled by lots more than her disability”; “I don’t care about the language. It’s how you treat him that matters”; “Labels? I try not to think about it I just use them to get funding”; “At times labels really hurt, which I know is stupid, but it just hurts sometimes.”

Inclusive/special

There is much confusion about the language of special education. The arm of the Ministry of Education that supports children who require additional support and resource to participate and learn within the New Zealand Curriculum was known as ‘Special Education’ at the beginning of this research; changing to ‘Learning Support’ at the end of 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2015a, 2017b). The language change is part of steps currently being undertaken by the Ministry of Education to “modernise a fully inclusive education system that puts the progress and achievement of all children and young people at its very

heart” (Ministry of Education, 2017b). At this stage there is no change to policy or to practice and, while the Ministry of Education promise a world-class inclusive education system, the understanding of togetherness and belonging is challenged by the presence of an alternate ‘special’ system (Ministry of Education, 1996a). The terms inclusion, inclusive practice, and belonging are used in this research to support the focus on democratic and socially just teaching and learning.

Narrative assessment/learning stories

Carr and Lee (2012) describe learning stories as a consequence of and an approach to the practice of narrative assessment. Within current research, the terms narrative assessment and learning stories appear to be used interchangeably. I use the term narrative assessment to highlight the storied nature and the importance of assessment within this work.

Student/child/learner

Childhood can be understood as a separate space from adulthood, referring to the period of an individual’s life from birth to the age of eighteen years (New Zealand Government, 2014; United Nations, 1989). Varied use of language within education in New Zealand refers to children (Ministry of Education, 2014; United Nations, 1989); students (Ministry of Education, 2007; New Zealand Government, 1989) and learners (Ministry of Education, 2012, 2013b). Following the Picot Report (1988), language changed to reflect a business model and schools became self-managing learning institutions (Codd, 2005a); teachers were referred to as ‘managers’ and children became ‘students’ and ‘learners’. (Ballard, 2004b; Nairn, Higgins, & Sligo, 2012; Olssen, 2004). This research recognises childhood as a social construction where children are active citizens who have the right to be respected and consulted in decisions made about them (Jenks, 2005; Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000; Smith, 2015; Taylor, Smith, & Gollop, 2009). Citizenship is denied for some children when they are excluded or discriminated against on grounds such as disability, ethnicity, religion, sexuality or social situation (Jenks, 2005; Lister, 2007; Taylor et al., 2009). The term ‘learner’ directs focus on outputs. The term ‘student’ focuses on teaching and learning. The term ‘child’ attends to a wider concern for each unique and whole person (Ballard, 2004b). The term ‘child’ recognises the individual as a family member, as a friend and as a

classmate. It recognises the complexity of teaching beyond achieving outcomes; to include care, responsibility and relationships (Ballard, 2004b; Freire, 1998; Monchinski, 2010). For this reason the word 'child' is used in preference to student or to learner in this work.

Thesis layout

In chapter two, I present a literature review grounded within a DSE approach, which explores the theories, processes and outcomes of assessment. This foregrounds an exploration of narrative assessment. I examine teaching and learning, paying particular attention to the area of children's voice.

In chapter three, I present the methodology used to inform the research. Theoretical frameworks are described, as are qualitative research approaches used. The research design is described and attention is given to data analysis. Ethical considerations are also discussed. The three children at the centre of this work are introduced and the processes that enabled their voices to be made visible are described.

Chapters four, five, and six present the research findings.

In chapter seven, I present a summary of the research findings and identify practical and theoretical implications of this work. Opportunities for ongoing research are identified.

Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the research context and rationale and located them within a human rights discourse. I have outlined the historical summary of educational policies and processes leading to current policy, and the impact of such in New Zealand primary schools today. I have discussed inclusive practice and children's right to education within the New Zealand Curriculum (2007). I have introduced narrative assessment as an approach that challenges exclusionary assessment practices, and explained key language choices in this work.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents literature that informs the thesis. The literature is selected to inform the research questions. Broader theoretical understanding is positioned within social justice, and how this connects to democracy and education. The lens used to explore these understandings is Disability Studies in Education (DSE). This meta focus is then directed to relevant New Zealand and international literature about teaching, learning and assessment. Focus is directed to effective pedagogy and what this means for classroom praxis, particularly in relation the rights of children and hearing their voices. As the aspect of teaching central to this work is assessment, attention then turns to an exploration and critique of assessment theory and practice within New Zealand primary schools. The chapter concludes by focusing on narrative assessment as the approach to assessment, which forms the cornerstone inquiry of this research.

Disability Studies in Education

This project is researched through a DSE lens, selected because of its holistic interdisciplinary inquiry approach that includes autobiography, the arts, cultural studies and political advocacy. DSE explores the complexity of the disability experience through various dynamic aspects of culture and society (Gabel, 2005; Kliwer, 2008a). Central to DSE is the concept that knowledge and experience is not discovered but is socially constructed by people as they engage with ideas and experiences (Connor, 2008; Gallagher, 2008). DSE challenges and resists common understandings of disability based on charity, inability, deficit and illness (Allan, 2012).

Goals of Disability Studies in Education

At the heart of DSE are possibilities for promoting inclusive education, and researchers in the field work in multiple ways to create opportunities for equitable access to educational opportunities for all children (Danforth & Gabel, 2008; Morton, 2012; Young & Mintz, 2008). This goes beyond legally mandated rights to embrace what is morally and socially

just. DSE scholarship encourages participation and leadership in research by disabled people through enabling and valuing physical and intellectual access (Gabel, 2005). This means actively listening to the voices of disabled people and responding to how they choose to participate (Rinaldi, 2006; van Hove et al., 2012). DSE draws attention to the importance of family in the lives of many disabled people (Macartney, 2011).

[Disability Studies in Education and teaching](#)

Scholars within DSE recognise the importance of connecting theory to teaching practice and to children's experiences, by remaining in touch with and learning from the everyday reality for disabled people in school (Connor & Gabel, 2013; Danforth & Gabel, 2008; Solis & Connor, 2008). Ware (2005) suggests schools do not readily contest commonly held meanings they may have around factors that marginalise, such as ethnicity, religion or disability. When teachers are working within multiple levels of accountability, measurement and compliance, opportunities to reflect collaboratively about constructs such as disability may be scarce.

[Links to research project](#)

Within this research, hearing the voices of disabled children and their families encouraged me to be reflexive both as a teacher and as a researcher. I valued the opportunity to critique my practice and my thinking so that I might recognise more inclusive ways of teaching (van Hove et al., 2012). DSE reminds me to be aware of normalising discourses and harmful stereotypes that subvert inclusive teaching and learning (Morton, 2012). I recognise that critique of my work is easier than reform and reconstruction. The combination of DSE alongside critical ethnography in this research study has enabled an exploration of narrative assessment, always with a belief that change is both important and possible (Slee, 2011; Young & Mintz, 2008). DSE has provided a framework that enabled me to think about my role as researcher and to accept that, as a teacher, I am walking in many spaces during this project. Exploring these myriad roles and relationships provided access to rich material that were I not a colleague/teacher/friend/student would not have been available in this work (Ruggles Gere, 2005).

Social justice

While discussions around justice ideas date back to classical times, the term 'social justice' was first used in the mid-19th century in response to societal change brought about by groups of citizens, including disabled people, who considered their opportunities and freedom within society were compromised (Gale, 2000). Social justice theory underpins all discussion about teaching and learning in this research, and is the philosophy that supports narrative assessment. An understanding of socially just ways of thinking and working provides a lens through which this research project can be understood.

While much is said about the importance of social justice, "whole books and treatises have been written ... without ever offering a definition of it" (Novak 2000 in Connor, 2014, p. 113). Social justice does not have a single critical meaning, therefore this writing defines and describes aspects of social justice which resonate with DSE and with teaching, learning and assessment.

Describing social justice

Social justice is bound up with the philosophy of morals, ethics and values. It is about ourselves, our relationships with others (Ballard, 2012) and distribution of resources (Gilbert, 2010). It is about fairness and equity. It can be about care and shared responsibility (Noddings, 1999). It is about rights and how they are enacted. It is about the rights of an individual in relation to the rights of a group (Ballard, 2012). Social justice is about responding to everyone in the same way compared to responding on the basis of individual need. Injustice can occur when those holding power make decisions that impact on the rights and freedom of those less powerful. A number of New Zealand educational processes based on neoliberal policies do not support classroom practices that value socially just ways of working (Rutherford, 2014). For example an annual financial grant given to schools to provide resources for children who require additional learning support is determined according to the income earning potential of the school neighbourhood, not on the numbers of identified children who require additional assistance (Ministry of Education, 2015b). Consequently, some children do not receive the support they need to actively participate in learning programmes (Ministry of Education, 2016d). Injustice

results in undeserved outcomes based on 'unfair' thinking or actions, and implies responsibility to rectify the circumstances that caused such (Young, 1990).

Social justice is about citizenship. Citizenship is a product of diversity rather than an institutional tool serving particular groups. Socially just policies apply to all individuals in all places at all times. In New Zealand, a political example of a socially just treaty is the Treaty of Waitangi. However the Treaty in itself does not eliminate the many aspects of unequal power relations that continue to exist between Maori and Pakeha people (Slee, 2014). New Zealand is a signatory to a number of treaties that focus on human rights and social justice; however active and ongoing community support is required to bring the political intent alive (United Nations, 1989, 2007; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1994; Young, 1990; Young & Nussbaum, 2013). bell hooks states that the only way to move from a culture where people are dominated "to a culture of fairness is to teach folks to love justice" (2014, p. 123).

Ways of understanding social justice and challenges within

Within the complexity of social justice, distributive, retributive and recognitive models can be explored in relation to democratic teaching and learning practice.

Distributive justice

Distributive justice is often associated with the writing of John Rawls, who argued that social justice is about individual freedom (insofar as it does not limit another's freedom), and the equal distribution of resources except where an unequal distribution would contribute to the well-being of those considered to have "unfavourable starting positions" (Gale, 2000, p. 253; Prilleltensky, 2014). In a classroom, if teaching resource was a cake, each child would get an equal sized piece. However a child who was considered disadvantaged would be given a larger piece to compensate for their disadvantage.

Retributive justice

Retributive justice recognises and rewards individuals based on their contribution to productive and competitive processes. It is not about equalising possessions but maximising an individual's freedom to be successful within a 'market'. In a classroom, this would mean children considered the most successful and ranked the most highly would

receive the biggest slice of cake. Retributive justice would consider any measures that limit an individual's freedom to demonstrate their talents or to reward successes as unjust (Gale, 2000).

Challenges with distributive and retributive models of social justice

Distributive and retributive models of social justice are largely concerned with how the 'cake' is cut and distributed. The concept of giving each person what they deserve or what they are due is largely uncontroversial. What is challenging is *how* to determine what each person is due. 'Need' and 'merit' are terms used in relation to allocation (Prilleltensky, 2014). However if an individual's 'need' is not met they may not have the opportunity to demonstrate 'merit'. The distributive model recognises disadvantage by varying the size of cake slices allocated. The outcome of the distributive model is basic access to resources. The retributive model gives the biggest slice of cake to those who rank highly in 'competitive' situations. The outcome of the retributive model is availability of resources based on individual talent and effort (Higgins, MacArthur, & Kelly, 2009).

However these are largely individualistic, market models of social justice and are applied outside of sociocultural processes; therefore relationships, culture and context are not factors considered when supporting people's rights (Christensen & Dorn, 1997; Gale, 2000; Higgins et al., 2009; Sikes & Vincent, 1998). Focusing on providing and distributing the resource to ameliorate injustice overrides any awareness of the institutional practices and processes that create it. Distributive and retributive models of social justice fail to recognise a politics of difference. A politics of difference acknowledges and values difference through policy and procedure in order to reduce acts of oppression (Young & Nussbaum, 2013).

Recognitive justice

Recognitive justice is not based around distribution or retribution, but on the institutional processes and procedures that create oppression and domination (Fraser, 1997; Gale, 2000; Sikes & Vincent, 1998; Young, 1990). Recognitive justice moves beyond understanding social justice in relation to what 'people have', to thinking about what 'people do'. While the material aspects of social justice are important, they should reflect

the consequences of socially just practices, not drive them (Gale, 2000). The recognitive model focuses on process by looking at the thinking that determines how the metaphorical cake is cut and allocated so that all people have the opportunity to exercise their agency and capability (Higgins et al., 2009; Peters, Wolbers, & Dimling, 2008).

Social justice and education

In education, the recognitive model is about equitable access to quality education for all children through challenge of the broader processes and policies that discriminate and oppress. This means all children are enabled “to communicate, participate, and assert self-determined social identities” (Christensen & Rizvi, 1996, p. 96). Recognitive justice challenges the distributive logic that suggests inclusive practice is a problem related to allocation of resources and organization of professional expertise (Slee, 1996). In reality, all children require some supports to facilitate learning, and many of the supports that enable disabled children are supportive of all children. Ideally, unique supports should be recognised as the norm (Smith et al., 2009). Talking books for children with visual impairment support literacy development for many children. A visual timetable to support children who find language processing challenging supports many children to more readily understand and follow daily classroom routines.

A democratic model of social justice is one that supports “multiple ways of being” (Gilbert, 2010, p. 72). In schools this means *not* trying to fit all children into standardised teaching programmes, assessment approaches, learning goals and ideals. A socially just model of educational practice would be able to respond to local context and would focus on relationships through collaborative inquiry involving teachers, children, family and community. Attending to respectful and equitable relationships can disrupt the power imbalance that may marginalise some children (Gale, 2000; Purpel, 1989). Recognising and critiquing past and current discrimination can support different ways of teaching and learning that actively value all teachers and children. Thinking about social justice in this way involves creativity, imagination and freedom to work differently (Young, 1990).

When we think about mandated assessment for all children, there is pressure to disregard difference and to impartially apply a process across all children. This means external

decision-makers limit teachers' ability to respond professionally, and to use their knowledge, creativity and skill to teach to individual need. A recognitive model of social justice would mean assessment processes are differentiated so all children can participate (Connor & Gabel, 2013; Rioux, 2014; Slee, 2011). Narrative assessment is a recognitive model of assessment, as it enhances the well-being of all learners.

Social justice and democracy

The term 'democracy' frequently appears in literature about social justice, and has complex and multiple meanings. John Dewey (1859-1952), a leading philosopher around democracy and education, claimed democracy was more a moral ideal than a political system (Hyttén, 2009). Democracy can be understood as an evolving cooperative way of life, where the concept of community is paramount and where people understand the importance of interdependence (Danforth, 2008; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014). Dewey suggests society is impossible without individuals and that individuality is impossible without society (Monchinski, 2010, p. 87).

Dewey's interest in education grew from a broader concern about social change and the role of community. Dewey observed that "democratic faith in human equality is the belief that every human being, independent of the quantity or range of his personal endowment, has the right to equal opportunity with every other person for development of whatever gifts he has" (Dewey, 1953 in Danforth, 2008, p. 45). "A democratic education not only avoids discrimination but also teaches values that reduce discrimination in the rest of society" (Monchinski, 2010, p. 145). There can be no democracy unless diversity is valued, and the power relations and domination that exist between different groups are acknowledged (Slee, 2001).

Child voice

'Student voice' or 'child voice' as referred to in this research has been defined as "the intentional collection and use of students' thinking and feedback on their learning, and using these voices to inform and improve teaching, learning and school-wide decision-making" (Cognition Education Trust, 2015). This suggests voice goes beyond speaking and

listening to requiring action and accountability to children (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015; Taylor et al., 2009).

Children have the right to express their views in matters that affect them, as determined particularly by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) (Lansdown, 2001; Office of the Children's Commission, 2016; United Nations, 1989). This right gives weight to the understanding that children are social beings whose contribution deserves respect and value. It disrupts the notion of powerful adults and powerless children and questions a world defined primarily in adult terms (Smith, 2015; Taylor et al., 2009). In New Zealand and internationally, there is an increasing body of knowledge outlining the importance of child voice in education and in research about teaching and learning (Lewis, 2010; Peters & Kelly, 2011; Smith, 2007, 2015; Whitehurst, 2006). In education, this means children are active, collaborative co-constructors of learning, not passive recipients of teacher knowledge (Guerin, 2015; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014; Peters & Kelly, 2011). Teachers are facilitators of learning within a culture of listening (Rinaldi, 2006). The commitment to giving children a voice supports them to develop confidence to become agents of their learning and of their social relationships and supports the development of their identity as people of value within their communities (Guerin, 2015; Macartney, 2011; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014).

Some voices are more easily heard than others. Those whose voices are the most challenging to hear require the greatest skill and resource to become audible. A rights agenda demands all voices are valued; a moral agenda demands the support required to realise the voices is available. Fear of failure to hear a voice should not prevent the attempt to listen, to understand and to act (Porter, 2014). There are many examples of research that includes the voices of disabled children (Guerin, 2015; MacArthur & Kelly, 2004; Moss, Deppeler, Astley, & Pattison, 2007; Peters & Kelly, 2011; Singal & Swann, 2011; Smith-Chandler & Swart, 2014; Whitehurst, 2006). It can take significant time and skill to develop trusting relationships with children, enabling them to openly and meaningfully share their thinking. For children who may not speak, the use of visuals, sign language, gesture, choice boards or head pointer switches can support meaningful communication. Billington (2009, p. 8) suggests five questions researchers should ask of ourselves as they seek to hear

children's voices in research: "How do we speak of children? How do we speak with children? How do we write of children? How do we listen to children? How do we listen to ourselves when working with children?" These important questions are only able to be answered through respectful collaboration between children and adults working in partnership.

Obtaining research consent from some children can be challenging. However, not actively gaining consent or choosing to exclude some children from research can reinforce the belief that those children do not have a voice, or that only some views are worthy (Porter, 2014). The onus is on researchers who listen to the voices of disabled children to ensure their thinking is included in research and that research outcomes are shared with the children in ways that makes sense to them.

Challenges in hearing voice

When working with children in research partnership, an imbalance of power may privilege adult voices over those of children. Children's voices may not be recognised or listened to if what they say critiques or challenges adult perspectives, or if they provide unexpected responses that fall outside the research agenda. Adults are at risk of filtering this information according to their own subjectivities and their expectations or preconceptions about the child. When adult researchers are reflexive in their practice, they may be more aware of processes that restrict children's voice (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2015; Habashi, 2005; Peters & Kelly, 2011). Families often support their children so their voices are heard. This may include political lobbying, supporting others to know their best way to communicate, interpreting responses or, in some cases, speaking for their children (Billington, 2014; Garth & Aroni, 2003). Child voice and family engagement are closely interconnected; lifting one can also lift the other (Cognition Education Trust, 2015).

Role of silence

While Article 12 of the UNCROC gives children the right to express their views, equally they should be asked if they want to contribute. In a research situation where the adult is more powerful or very well known, a child may not feel they are able to choose not to participate (Lundy, 2007). Alternatively children may wish to contribute but remain silent if they do

not know the researcher or if they are not confident communicators. Listening to silence is important, as what children do not say can be revealing. Silence is not neutral or empty. Some children require considerable wait time to process language and to respond. This response time, where a researcher waits, can also be interpreted as demanding of a response and not accepting that silence may be a child's way of choosing not to participate (Lewis, 2010; Porter, 2014).

Child voice and inclusive practice

Actively listening to children's perspective is an integral part of the teaching-as-inquiry cycle which is embedded in the narrative assessment process (Ministry of Education, 2009c; Tetler & Baltzer, 2011; Veck, 2009). The vision of the New Zealand Curriculum means teachers listen and respond to all voices in their classes (Ministry of Education, 2007). Children's voices can influence change when policies and practices are implemented and reviewed. (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005; Broer, Doyle, & Giangreco, 2005; Cognition Education Trust, 2015; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2015; Nutbrown & Clough, 2009). Listening to the voices of disabled children by providing equitable access to communication can motivate children to engage with each other and with learning in ways that may not have been previously possible. For children, having a voice, being heard and listened to, promotes citizenship, self-advocacy skills and agency. Having a voice provides children with a way to have their needs met and to help keep themselves safe from harm and abuse (Biklen, 2000; Office of the Children's Commission, 2016).

Citizenship

Citizenship can be defined as equality of status and as an entitlement to respect, recognition and participation with other people within a group, community or society (Neale, 2004, p. 8). Implicit in the concept of citizenship is a rights perspective that includes "togetherness, connectedness, and a sharing of common interests, but also of difference and uniqueness" (Taylor et al., 2009, p. 15). Citizenship rights are as important to children as to anyone else. Rights are not legally enforceable but have moral and ethical implications for countries such as New Zealand, which has ratified relevant conventions (Lister, 2007; Taylor et al., 2009). Any decisions and actions that promote positive attitudes towards

children's well-being and their inclusion in all aspects of society can help support cohesive community today and society in the future (Office of the Children's Commission, 2016). Understanding children as citizens has important implications for teaching pedagogy (Peters & Kelly, 2011). It means we recognise teaching and learning in a more holistic sense, occurring both inside and outside the classroom (Crane, 2001). Enacting citizenship may challenge many aspects of current education policy and the reality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Teaching

This section focuses on teaching and learning. The historical and current context for teachers is presented. Teaching with an ethic of care is described in relation to effective pedagogy. While the research focus is disabled children, this section does not attend to disability in particular. The theories and ideas presented in relation to teaching are considered to apply equally to all children and all teachers.

Purpose and philosophy of education

Historically, the purpose of education had been social mobility and supporting opportunities for financial gain (Labaree, 1997). Early last century, a focus of education was to discover occupations children were most suited to, teach the required skill set and then secure opportunities for work. It was considered that this approach to learning was the key to happiness (Dewey, 1917 in Noddings, 2012). Dewey believed that the true aim of education is at every stage an added capacity for growth, which included preparing children for meaningful citizenship while reducing inequitable processes that limit participation (Dewey, 1938).

A democratic, liberal approach to education means teaching is supported by a welfare state and education is regarded as a public good for the development of a more just society. Learning about democracy and citizenship within a democratic school structure could be considered a central purpose of education. (Edelstein, 2011). A democratic education system enables all children to communicate their thinking, and supports diversity and individuality by responding creatively to problems, challenges and ways of knowing.

Democratic teaching

Democratic teaching can be considered much like a garden (Allan, 2012). As a gardener, the teacher knows the plants and recognises different plants need different nutrients, protection and environment to ensure they all flourish in their different ways. Democratic teachers support children to find their own voices and enjoy the diverse educational outcomes that occur when their interests and questions have a role in constructing the learning. It is challenging for some teachers to work in this way and creativity may be stifled by imposed standardised expectations. Socially just practices support schools becoming democratic communities.

Democratic schools are characterised by engaged, relevant and socially responsible learning; a cooperative and caring environment; differentiated learning; a value of diversity; and equitable access to resources (Fraser, Aitken, & Whyte, 2013; Giroux, 2003; Hipkins et al., 2014). Democratic schools require teachers who are imaginative and innovative in response to local children, schools, communities and education policies (O'Brien, 2005). Giroux (1997) and Freire (2007) write about the 'politics of educated hope' where teachers resist dominant ways of working in the hope of transforming teaching and learning through responsive pedagogy. This challenges the damage that may be caused by cynicism and apathy as teachers feel they have lost the essence of creativity and imagination in their work. Teachers require courage to align teaching requirements with personal values when dominant normative practice challenges the beliefs and understandings about the purpose of education (Apple, 2013). As Horton et al. remind us, "only people with hope will struggle" (1998, p. 44). Democracy enacted in the classroom is a visibly collaborative process, where teachers and children share ideas and learn together, generating new thinking. For Freire (1992, 1997), the power relationship between the expert teacher and inexperienced child is disrupted by shared dialogue and mutual respect which enable all class members to take increased responsibility for learning.

When interdependence is valued over independence at school, children can come to see shared learning and cooperation in the classroom as a way to support everyone's belonging at school and more widely as citizens in their communities (Ballard, 2012; 2013c; Slee, 2011). Belonging in community is about morality and an awareness of the needs of others.

Elements of learning to be a citizen are advocated for in the New Zealand Curriculum but may be undervalued because they are not measured within the prevailing testing culture.

However, as much as teachers enjoy freedom to be creative, freedom requires rigour and teachers and children need accountability and responsibility as they work to achieve desired goals. One needs to be responsible to become responsible (Freire, 1992; Noddings, 2012). Freire described teachers as ‘cultural workers’ who recognised that education was a political act, and that a key purpose of education was to work towards more just and caring societies (Freire 1998, in Apple, 1999). A goal as large as creating change within society appears overwhelming and fraught with challenge. However, as Ayers, Quinn and Stovall note:

We don't really know how to change the world, of course; we don't know when our efforts are in vain; but we do know that change in small places can gesture towards larger transformations, and that changing a single mind can unleash a universe of possibilities

(Ayers, Quinn and Stovall, 2009 in Morton, Duke, et al., 2012, p. 41).

Teaching in neoliberal times

Teaching in New Zealand today is dominated by the neoliberal policies of the late 1980s, which are the antithesis of democratic policies based on beliefs of Dewey (Edelstein, 2011; Festenstein, 2014). As long ago as 2001, the OECD stated that the current move towards individualism was counter-productive in the interdependent world in which we live (Gallagher, 2005). Neoliberal policies “erode the ‘social glue’ that is essential not only for individual and social development, but also for economic development” (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001, p. 39). Enactment of neoliberal policies means that teachers work in environments which prioritise individuals as autonomous choosers who act competitively and with self-interest (Skrtic, 2005). The state has a reduced role as the free market is maximized (Ballard, 2012; Blase & Blase, 1998). Freire states that “democracy cannot be rooted in the ethics of the market” (1998, p. 25). Outcomes of neoliberal policies include increasing school segregation based on factors such as economy and race and lead to reduced tolerance of community diversity (O’Brien, 2005).

Disabled children are increasingly marginalised in schools, where democratic and socially just ways of working are overpowered by dominant neoliberal policies and practices that increasingly strip teachers of innovation and children of curiosity, as external more powerful people decide what is to be learned and how it is to be assessed. Imposed market-model structures place increasing demands on schools for maintaining decreed standards, demonstrating accountability, delivering prescribed curricula and implementing specific schoolwide programmes around classroom management. Teachers often work within a climate of distrust and blame (Slee, 2011). An outcome of this is teachers consistently on the defensive. Classroom communities are dissolved within a schoolwide veneer of 'sameness'.

Co-operative ways of teaching and learning are diminished by the current competitive school culture fuelled by widespread standardised testing (Crooks, 2011; New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011). Teachers may feel pressured to 'teach to the tests' to maximise higher results. Families may feel the need for private tutoring or may select schools for their children on the basis of their public 'performance'. The concept of a community school is threatened, as families who are able move to schools they perceive to offer better outcomes for their children (Gallagher, 2005; Goodman, 2014; Slee, 2011). The connections between teaching and learning within the school and the wider community may be threatened by irrelevance as the local children disperse.

Curriculum, teaching and learning

In every classroom, teachers work within a curriculum which provides the outline, the structure and the content of teaching. At a national level, New Zealand has two Curriculum documents, one for English medium schools and one for Maori medium schools (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2008). The content of this is decided by those in the Ministry of Education who determine what is to be taught in school and what is valuable to learn. This can be considered as oppressive and prescriptive or as a license to freely create within. At face value, a national Curriculum presents an ideology of equality in that all children and all schools have a level playing field in which to work. At a school level, the New Zealand Curriculum is interpreted and locally developed to meet schoolwide goals (Ministry of

Education, 2007). Content and construction of school curriculum is influenced by school and community values and beliefs around teaching, learning, diversity and political structures (Ainscow et al., 2006; Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Morton, 2014; Morton, Rietveld, et al., 2012).

Curriculum enacted in the classroom is never free of the educational control of central government. A particular world view is deemed important and therefore visible. If children coming into school have experiences different to the dominant school view, they may be assessed and considered not ready to learn or teachers may be considered inadequate to teach. Freire (1998) would suggest that neither view holds merit, and that effective curriculum is about the relationship that is developed between children and teachers so that learning grows from the child's current level of skill, knowledge and understanding. All children enter school with "an open-ended potential for learning", and skilled teaching pedagogy supports belonging for all within the classroom community (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Kasa-Hendrickson, 2005; Kaur, 2012; Skidmore, 2002, p. 120; Wansart, 1995).

Teachers as professionals require and value opportunities to improve their praxis. Ongoing collegial inquiry into ideology, language, and creativity, supports an environment that has high expectations for all teachers and all children (Ainscow et al., 2006; Alton-Lee, 2003; Corcoran & Finney, 2015; Kluth, 2003; Morton, 2012; Skidmore, 2002; Swann, Peacock, Hart, & Drummond, 2012; Wansart, 1995). Not all teachers experience flexibility in how curriculum is interpreted and taught within their classrooms. Children's views may be absent from this process. Teachers who believe in democratic educational processes may be ethically challenged by New Zealand's current competitive, individualist system which discourages genuine collaboration.

Pedagogy

In teaching and learning the curriculum can be described as the 'what' and 'pedagogy' as the how. 'Pedagogy' and 'praxis' are terms that are frequently used interchangeably when talking about teaching. Pedagogy involves teaching style, strategies, relationships that teachers form with children, and how these are interpreted within the teaching and learning process. Pedagogy also includes care and friendship that may be both visible and

invisible within teaching (Gabel, 2001; Jones, 2013). Dialogue that supports caring relationships enables ideas to be contested, shared and explored in a respectful way (Apple, 1999; Giroux, 1997; Pillay, 2014; Timperley & Earl, 2012; van Hove et al., 2008).

Critical pedagogy involves deep inquiry into teaching and learning in order to resist ways of working that may be disrespectful, harmful or uncaring; and to highlight inclusive ways of being and of relating (Freire, 1992; Hamer, 2010; Monchinski, 2010; Morton, 2014). For Freire (1992), critical pedagogy is as much to do with the caring heart as it is with the teaching mind. Critical pedagogy recognises courage and love evident in the relationships between teachers and children (Freire, 1992; Peters, 2005).

An umbrella over all pedagogical decisions is the Code of Ethics. All teachers registered to teach in New Zealand are bound by the Code of Ethics, which takes account of legal requirements as well as obligations of teachers to honour the Treaty of Waitangi (Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2016). The Code of Ethics supports “the highest standards of professional service in the promotion of learning”, which reflect a commitment to learners, to family and whanau, to society and to the teaching profession (Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2016).

Effective pedagogy

Effective pedagogy can be understood as approaches that support “the highest standards of teaching” (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Pedagogy drives teaching, learning and assessment. Within the New Zealand Curriculum, seven approaches which consistently have a positive impact on children’s learning are identified (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Evidence suggests children learn best when teachers:

- *create a supportive learning environment*
- *encourage reflective thought and action*
- *enhance the relevance of new learning*
- *facilitate shared learning*
- *make connections to prior learning and experience*
- *provide sufficient opportunities to learn*
- *inquire into the teaching–learning relationship*

(Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 34).

In a *supportive learning environment*, learning is inseparable from its social and cultural context. Children learn best when they feel accepted, when they enjoy positive relationships with their peers and their teachers, and when they are able to be active, visible members of the learning community (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 34). Teachers recognise their responsibility for creating a classroom culture built on positive relationships with children and families, that also reflects the many cultural backgrounds and diverse experiences of the children (Bevan-Brown, 2006; Macfarlane & Margrain, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2013a).

Children learn most effectively when they develop the *ability to be reflective learners*, to assimilate new learning, relate it to what they already know, adapt it for their own purposes, and translate thought into action (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 34). This means teachers create space in the teaching day to listen, to observe, to reflect, and to encourage children to think critically about information, ideas and materials (Singal, 2011; Wansart, 1995). Active, attentive listening takes teachers beyond the technical aspect of teaching to a tenderness where respect is visible (Veck, 2009). Teachers who actively listen demonstrate respect for diversity, notice complexities and seek teaching and learning opportunities that include all children (Graham & Macartney, 2012; Kluth, 2003). Deep and active listening requires teachers to be confident to wait for children's responses, and not fill a silence or provide all the information. In this way a teacher is sharing power in the classroom, and teaching is strengthened through genuine collaboration (Hill & Sewell, 2010).

New learning is enhanced when it builds on what children know; when children understand what they are learning, why they are learning it, and how they will be able to use their new learning (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 34). Effective teachers stimulate curiosity in children and provide opportunities to explore new ideas within known contexts (Hipkins, 2007b).

In a learning community *teachers learn alongside children* and knowledge is co-constructed in an environment where children's experiences and ideas are valued (Cowie, Glynn, & Otrell-Cass, 2009; hooks, 1994b). Learning as a shared activity does not mean each child

experiences the lesson in the same way. A shared pedagogical approach moves away from thinking about teaching that works for most children with something extra or different for those who experience difficulties and moves towards rich learning opportunities that are more inclusive of all children (Black-Hawkins, 2012). Differentiating learning material, using natural supports such as classroom buddies, and adapting aspects of the environment to support learning for individuals as needed supports the class to work together as a community to access meaningful learning (Florian, 2014b; Guerin, 2015; McIlroy, 2015; Morton, Rietveld, et al., 2012). For some disabled children, considerable adaptation and differentiation is required to enable curricular access and meaningful participation. While many teaching approaches work for all children, some children require very specific supports such as visuals, sign language or a supporting adult to engage in learning. A team approach that prioritises family or iwi knowledge alongside the professionals and the child, is culturally responsive and respectful of all team members (Berryman, 2014).

When teachers engage collaboratively as a staff in learning conversations and professional development, they feel less threatened by new developments and imposed requirements, as open sharing can instil team confidence and awareness of all as learners (Blase & Blase, 1998; Gordon-Burns, Gunn, Purdue, & Surtees, 2012). Effective collaboration requires teachers to critically examine their own discourses and assumed truths by looking beyond and into themselves to consider the impact of their way of working (Allan, 2012; Macfarlane, Macfarlane, & Margrain, 2011).

Teachers know that children learn in different ways and therefore provide *multiple contexts, experiences and opportunities for them to practise and embed new learning*. Teachers craft learning opportunities that create challenge and connect across contexts and communities (Alton-Lee, 2003; hooks, 1994a; Purpel & McLaurin, 2004). Most children require teacher scaffolding to bridge the gap between existing and new learning. This is no different for disabled children, who may require more opportunities or different forms of scaffolding. When teachers know children well, they recognise capabilities demonstrated in some contexts and not in others, and plan to build on strengths to support meaningful participation. A child who is not yet visibly participating in a learning activity may be

internalising and learning aspects of the task even when they are not performing them, or they may benefit from a differentiated task to support their learning. Having high expectations of all means that children who require additional support or differentiation have what they need to participate in learning and to be successful (Alton-Lee, 2003; Purpel, 1989). High expectations means that there is an unrelenting focus on learning and achieving within the New Zealand Curriculum (Alton-Lee, 2003; Boyd, 2009; Jones, 2013; Macfarlane & Margrain, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2007). “Since any teaching strategy works differently in different contexts for different students, effective pedagogy requires that teachers inquire into the impact of their teaching on their students” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 35). *Teaching as inquiry* is a cyclical process which usually begins with teachers identifying learning outcomes for children; planning and teaching in ways that support achievement of outcomes; investigating the success of teaching and learning using a range of assessment outcomes and reflecting on practice to determine ongoing learning. Genuine inquiry involves taking risks, making mistakes and trying again (Timperley, Kaser, & Halbert, 2014). Within the cycle, learning outcomes can be differentiated to provide authentic teaching and learning opportunities for all children. Effective pedagogy is quality teaching for *every* child. It is enacted as teachers co-construct and reflect on their pedagogy.

Role of reflexivity

The Curriculum makes numerous references to the terms ‘reflection’ and ‘reflexivity’ (Ministry of Education, 2007). Reflective thought and action are key components of effective pedagogy (p.34), key competencies (p.12) and principles which form the foundation of curriculum decision-making (p.9) (Ministry of Education, 2007). While the terms reflection, reflexivity and reflective thought are not defined in the Curriculum, reflection can be understood as a conscious process that either affirms or confronts existing practice and may be a catalyst for ongoing improvements in teaching and learning (Blase & Blase, 1998; Ministry of Education, 2007). The terms reflexivity and reflexive praxis are used interchangeably. Reflexivity involves critically looking back with the purpose of informing the future (Davies, 2008). Reflexive praxis can occur in the private thinking of an individual, or can occur in dialogue with others. Dialogue can support and challenge teachers and children to identify, clarify, and critique their beliefs, values and

actions as they work alongside others in collegial and classroom situations. Narrative is a useful tool for reflecting on assumptions and on practice within teaching (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connor, Valle, & Hale, 2012).

There is a difference between reflection in practice and reflection on practice (Schön, 1991). Reflection in practice is a way of working that responds to ongoing tensions, challenges and discoveries that emerge during teaching and learning and encourages flexibility within the classroom curriculum. Reflection on practice happens after the event and is based on a sequential but not rigidly adhered to way of thinking. This involves personal inquiry around questions: what did I do? (describing the teaching); what did this mean? (critiquing to inform); how did I come to be like this? (challenging practice and ways of being); how might I do things differently? (reconstructing practice to think about improvements and next learning steps follow). Reflection does not occur in a vacuum but within a context of past learning and current and future expectations (Blase & Blase, 1998).

The reflexive teacher

“Lifelong learners who are critical and creative thinkers”, “who reflect on their own learning processes and learn how to learn” are the vision of the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 7). Reflexive teachers who act on their thinking welcome opportunities to make teaching and learning increasingly meaningful. Teachers create opportunities and teach processes that enable children to reflect on their learning in light of lesson objectives. A school culture that is visibly respectful is more likely to support creativity and risk-taking that may emanate from reflexivity (Hipkins et al., 2014).

Teachers and those learning to be teachers benefit from the opportunity to rigorously reflect on their own beliefs, attitudes and values and to articulate their understanding around factors such as cultural diversity, disability and sexuality and the potential implications for their teaching praxis (Connor et al., 2012). Learning to be an effective teacher for all children involves being prepared to learn and relearn, to construct and reconstruct a professional identity and professional values (Smith & Long, 2013). Embedding the theory and practice of teaching diverse communities across all teacher

training programmes could render separate classes teaching 'inclusion' redundant (Rice, 2008; Tregaskis, 2008).

Assessment processes can be reflexive when teachers and children work together to understand learning and to set future trajectories. Narrative assessment is recognised as an assessment approach that demands reflexivity, as it is interwoven with the idea of teachers as learners who work alongside children and other professionals to consider how curriculum pedagogy affects what children learn and how they might understand themselves in relation to the world around them (Ministry of Education, 2009c; Morton, Rietveld, et al., 2012).

Professional development

Some teachers reflecting on teaching and learning experiences in their classrooms expressed concern about their ability and confidence to teach all children (Ministry of Education, 2016b). They described limited access to practical support through meaningful professional development (Education Review Office, 2010, 2015a, 2015c; Guerin, 2015; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014). For teachers to feel supported, professional development that is timely, responsive and practicable can have positive outcomes for teaching and learning (Timperley et al., 2007). Teachers described how important it was to not feel alone when trying to understand complex and challenging classroom reality. They identified a need to share, learn, and explore new language and ideas in an environment that was not judgemental (McIlroy, 2015). Valuing and using vocabularies of hope, of kindness and of respect are important in creating classroom environments that not only support diversity but have the potential to transform classrooms so that new ways of understanding teaching and learning can be explored (Ainscow, 2015; Jones, 2013).

Building teacher capability and confidence through professional development is more likely to be successful if fully supported by school leadership and if programmes are embedded slowly and build on acknowledged good classroom practice (Black & William, 2001; Robinson & Carrington, 2002; Robinson et al., 2009; Timperley et al., 2007). Superficial change is unlikely to be sustained (Monchinski, 2010; Timperley & Parr, 2010). However, good ideas can be implemented poorly or not at all, and their success hinges on

what happens at the smallest level in the system. This means that successful professional development outcomes will always depend on what happens in each classroom, regardless of what occurs at the school or policy level (Guskey, 2002).

Teachers understanding of capability - the example of literacy

Recognition of children's capability is often linked to communication (Biklen & Burke, 2006). Children who are easily able to communicate are often considered more capable than their peers who may need support to share their thinking and relate to others (Biklen & Kliever, 2006). Children who do not speak may have limited access to a rich literacy programme and to the opportunities available to their peers in the classroom. A narrowed approach to literacy capability reinforced by standardised assessment can serve to channel children into restrictive learning pathways (Slee, 2011). Alternatively, when literacy is understood as more than independent acts of reading and writing, the curriculum expands to recognise multiple layers of capability (Kliever, 2008b; Wansart, 1995; Wansart, 2003). Literacy involves children making sense of their learning and is socially constructed over time and place to include multiple ways children process and share understandings and may include dance, pictures, facial expression and conversation (Kliever, 2008b; Wansart, 1995). Recognising capability supports children to develop a positive identity (Wansart, 1995). Conversely when capability is linked to mastery of specific tasks, children's strengths may be invisible.

Learning

Learning is a word often associated with accruing *knowledge*, and the words are sometimes used interchangeably. Learning is a process and knowledge can be both a process and an artefact of that process. Challenge occurs when we assess learning by assessing discrete knowledge. Many approaches to assessment involve disconnected material that fails to recognise process, context, culture and diversity within learning.

There are multiple understandings of the word 'knowledge'. It might be a collection of facts that exist 'out there' waiting to be discovered, developed and accumulated. This knowledge is passive. Knowledge may involve a socially constructed process, whereby a collection of interrelated ideas are developed and woven together to create something new (Andreotti &

Wheeler, 2010). Freire (1997, p. 23) describes knowledge as something that emerges through “invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful enquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other”.

Knowledge in the twenty first century is increasingly described as dynamic and interactive (Gilbert, 2010). Knowledge that underpins the school curriculum is intended to develop “the best” in the minds of the next generation. This knowledge is an expression of the dominant culture defining curriculum and pedagogical approach. Challenge occurs when knowledge deemed desirable may not reflect what is knowable, meaningful or relevant to the diversity of cultural experiences within communities.

Learning is not about transmission or reproduction but is a process of co-construction using artefacts and is meaningfully enhanced through relationships (Rinaldi, 2006). Over twenty years ago, the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, in a report to UNESCO, made a plea for education to be considered in a broader context. The report (Delors, 1996) argued that education throughout life is based on knowing, being, doing and living together. In an ideal context, education includes inquiry, sharing, community and reflection. It draws on reasoning, critiquing, navigating complexity, supporting children’s agency, explaining, interpreting, active participation, listening and drawing on information from multiple environments and contexts (Dunst, Trivette, Humphries, Raab, & Roper, 2001; Freire, 1997; Peters et al., 2008; Rinaldi, 2006; Timperley & Earl, 2012). Active learning recognises “human potential is not predictable, that children’s futures are unknowable, and that education has the power to enhance the lives of all” (Swann et al., 2012, p. 1).

Banking model

The ‘banking model’ of teaching and learning is a term coined by Freire (1997, 1998, 2007), applied to an approach to teaching praxis. Children are viewed as passive recipients waiting to be filled with expert teacher knowledge (Monchinski, 2010). Power lies with the teacher who delivers prescribed content, values and ideology (van Hove et al., 2008). This authoritarian top down approach to teaching negates inquiry and children’s voice, and is antithetical to the development of a democratic classroom. A democratic approach to praxis requires teachers to understand teaching as a complex, intellectual, cultural and

social endeavour (O'Brien, 2005). Education can become a practice of freedom and of the possible, when teachers and children are empowered to work together to become more fully human (Freire, 1997; hooks, 1994a).

Active learning

Active learning is the antithesis of the 'bucket' approach to teaching. Active learning means children are investigators and actors as they experience learning opportunities and construct meaning (Broadfoot, 2007; Kluth, 2000). Part of the teacher role is to create the context in which such action becomes possible. In an active learning environment all teachers and all children are learning. Teachers advocate for capability by using children's strengths to inform teaching praxis (Wansart, 1995). Subject areas such as literacy extend beyond the core strands of reading, writing and speaking to include the social processes of meaning making through communication and access to multiple forms of text such as photographs, film, painting, dance and drama (Hamer, 2010; Kliewer, 2008b; Wansart, 1995).

Passion and fun

Passionate teachers are those who care deeply and nurture all aspects of learning with kindness and respect (Monchinski, 2010). This does not mean learning expectations are lower; on the contrary the desire to develop the potential of every child drives a passionate approach to democratic teaching intended to foster achievement and citizenship (Kluth, 2003; Macfarlane & Margrain, 2011; Noddings, 2012; Wink, 2011). Passionate teachers celebrate learning success and are excited by the achievements of all their children (hooks, 1994b).

Ethic of care

An ethic of care concerns the moral concepts of responsibilities and relationships, rather than rights and rules (Monchinski, 2010). An ethic of care and social justice are mutually interdependent. An ethic of care emphasises belonging and community. Within teaching, neoliberal policies that restrict practice diminish the importance of care. Kindness and care subvert neoliberalism and foster collaboration. An ethic of kindness differs from 'due care', which is required in the teaching profession and is about preventing harm. An ethic of care

embedded in teaching pedagogy is a political act of love and courage and has the potential to transform educational practice (Clegg & Rowland, 2010; Kluth, 2003; Monchinski, 2010; Peters, 2005). When classrooms embody a culture of care, boundaries between teachers and learners blur as teaching and learning become collaborative, culturally responsive practices that respond to the changing needs of all learners (Macfarlane, Macfarlane, Savage, & Glynn, 2012).

An ethic of care is based on relationships that are built on observation and listening (Nelson, 2013). Teachers and children learn to care as they are cared for; “we learn to care by caring” (Monchinski, 2010, p. 48). Each child’s ability to belong and contribute in the classroom is dependent on being attentively listened to and cared about (Graham & Macartney, 2012; Rinaldi, 2006). Allan (2012) states that effective caring pedagogy requires teachers to love each one of the children and to demonstrate values of nurturing, compassion and attentiveness to all children. Caring teachers support children to express themselves while maintaining professional boundaries and protecting children (Noddings, 1995).

Caring about all children and taking time to establish relationships means teachers are more likely to come to know their children with high and complex needs, recognise their capabilities and support them to be active participants in the classroom (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Bogdan & Taylor, 1989; Purpel, 1989). While not all children may be skilled at or interested in physical education or chemistry, all children can be supported to discover and to reveal what they care about and use this to make positive and meaningful contributions in their families, with their friends and as they move into the adult world (Noddings, 2012).

Ethics are at the heart of Freire’s critical pedagogy, for he considered humans to be capable of continuous development and of always becoming more human (Freire, 2003 in Monchinski, 2010). Teachers whose practice is driven by an ethic of care embody education as an act of courage and of love as they build on the essence and strengths of every child. This way of working embodies inclusive classroom practices and can effectively challenge current political discourse that marginalises some children (Peters, 2005).

Assessment

In this section, assessment is defined and purposes, practices and consequences are explored. A focus is on New Zealand primary schools and on the theory of narrative assessment.

Defining assessment

Terminology used to describe educational processes is constantly evolving and in the last thirty years the term ‘assessment’ replaced the word ‘evaluation’ (Crooks, 2011). Evaluation was a term used in a narrow sense, mainly related to the educational development of large numbers of tertiary students. Assessment involves making professional observations on the extent or quality of performance through gathering and interpreting evidence to support decision making and action (Cowie, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2017b; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010; Taras, 2007). Within the school context, Rinaldi’s definition of assessment is both simple and complex – “deciding what to give value to”, a perspective that enables those carrying out assessment to make explicit and visible the content and the process. It gives responsibility to the educator and prioritises relationships between teachers and children within the assessment processes (Rinaldi, 2006, p.72 in Drummond, 2008).

Assessment is not a subcategory of teaching, nor is teaching complemented by assessment. Teaching and assessment cannot be prised apart as each informs the other (Neyland, 2007). The classroom teacher manages complex interactions between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and the effect these interactions have on children’s educational and social outcomes (Carr, 2001; Jones & Baker, 2005; Smith, 2010). In the longer term, assessment outcomes shape children’s perceptions about themselves and about their future opportunities (Cowie, 2009).

Purpose of assessment

Historically, assessment was used to categorise, identify and promote small numbers of students to further economic and social leadership roles within society. Traditional and commonly accepted views of assessment relate to individual test performance; a focus on recall or demonstrating a learned skill; a test that is scheduled separately at the end of a

chunk of learning; tightly monitored timeframes; absence of materials to support the assessment; and a test result that enables ranking and comparison between children (James, 2008). Academic achievement is usually evaluated by how high children score on a standardised test. This may be related to a previous personal score but is also valued in relation to reporting of schoolwide data (Edelstein, 2011; Festenstein, 2014).

Three broad purposes of assessment that inform educators' thinking are accountability and reporting by describing achievement at a particular point in time; improving teaching and learning across and within all layers of the schooling system; and fostering lifelong learning (Absolum et al., 2009; Hipkins, 2007b; Ministry of Education, 2011b; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010). For assessment outcomes to support ongoing learning for all children, questions need to go beyond test scores to exploration of teaching practice (Florian, Rouse, Black-Hawkins, & Jull, 2004).

Types of assessment

The Curriculum describes the purpose of assessment as “improving students' learning and teachers' teaching as both student and teacher respond to the information that it provides” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 39). Assessment is considered more likely to be effective when it benefits children, involves children, supports teaching and learning goals, is planned and communicated, is suited to the purpose, and is valid and fair (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 40). In New Zealand, teachers are familiar with the terms ‘summative’ and ‘formative’ and with a range of assessment processes. To better understand the nature of these terms, summative assessment is referred to as assessment of learning and formative assessment as assessment for learning. More recently the term ‘assessment as learning’ has been added (Earl, 2003 in Crooks, 2011). The terms summative and formative assessment do not apply to specific assessments but rather what is done to the data that emerges from the assessment process (Wiliam, 2011a). This means an assessment can have both summative and formative functions. An assessment designed for summative purposes may be used formatively to guide teaching and learning. For example, in primary schools, a BURT test gives a score which translates to a child's ‘spelling age’. Such scores are often ranked within classes to create instructional spelling groups. This is a summative assessment process. If the teacher were to examine the responses given by each child and

perhaps discuss spelling strategies, this may result in some goals set specifically targeted to support each child's spelling progress. The BURT test has now been used formatively. A selection of frequently-used structured assessment tools and brief descriptions is recorded in Appendix twenty six.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment is a measure of learning that involves describing, judging, scoring and reporting to provide evidence of achievement. It includes assessing specific learning content at two points in time and comparing outcomes. A frequently used approach to assessment of reading in primary schools in New Zealand is running records where the 'test' provides a reading age for the child. Subsequent results are compared as evidence of reading progress. This is a summative assessment of reading, but can be used formatively to support ongoing learning if the reading behaviours demonstrated by the child are unpacked and new teaching and learning goals developed (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Earl & Giles, 2011). Summative assessment for external purposes is different from ongoing assessment that is used to improve progress (Black & William, 2001; Broadfoot, 2007).

Summative assessment can often feel impersonal as it does not represent the uniqueness of a child, and it provides a picture that is somewhat general and blunt. Feedback of summative assessment to children focuses on a past performance in relation to a particular piece of learning and is product orientated. As a formal, standardised approach to assessment, the teacher is perceived as the expert and outcomes are frequently used to provide information about eligibility and placement. The child is the passive recipient of the assessment outcome. Summative assessment can reinforce children having fixed ideas about their capability, and not recognising their potential to grow, to learn and to make progress. As summative assessment increases in classrooms and the richness of the curriculum potentially shrinks, the breadth of children's interests and capabilities may become less visible (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Black & William, 2001; Bourke & Mentis, 2013; Broadfoot, 2007; Earl & Giles, 2011). Valuing diversity, and using summative assessment to rank children are incompatible. "You cannot measure and rank diversity ... diversity is flattened and disappears in the very act of being measured and ranked" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 237).

Formative assessment

While summative assessment can be understood as assessment *of* learning with the general function of reporting, formative assessment is defined as assessment *for* learning with the general function of informing and improving teaching and learning. Assessment for learning is planned as a dynamic and integral part of daily classroom practice by teachers, children and peers that involves observation, reflecting and responding to information from dialogue, demonstration and noticing interaction that enhances ongoing learning (Broadfoot, 2007; Clark, 2008; Cowie & Bell, 1999; Crooks, 2011; Sach, 2015; Wiliam, 2011a). A narrower conception involves having a clear learning goal, identifying gaps between the child's current practice and the goal, and identifying the processes required to close the gap and achieve the goal (Crooks, 2011).

William (2011a, p. 2) identifies five key strategies of formative assessment. Formative assessment provides feedback that moves learning forward, by clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success. It enables the engineering of effective classroom discussions, activities and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning. It provides feedback that motivates children to own their own learning and become instructional resources for each other in the classroom. Formative assessment is closely aligned with sociocultural ways of teaching and learning, and with inclusive classroom pedagogy.

The term 'assessment as learning' has been used to focus attention on teachers informing their own practice while assessing, and on children's participation in the assessment process. Emphasis on self-evaluation and active participation in feedforward are recognised as skills that support lifelong learning (Crooks, 2011; Earl & Giles, 2011). It is clear that 'assessment as learning' is a central component of 'assessment for learning'. Feedback in formative assessment often becomes feedforward as it focuses on partnership with children, providing them with practical information about the next steps and the scaffolding required to achieving their learning goals (Bourke & Mentis, 2013; Cowie, 2009; Sadler, 1989). Disabled children, whose learning is often invisible in summative assessment, may have learning recognised through formative assessment as teacher and child engagement in learning is made visible (Bourke & Mentis, 2013; Bourke, Mentis, &

Todd, 2011). While many assessment initiatives have failed in raising achievement outcomes, innovations that strengthen formative assessment practice have resulted in significant learning gains for children (Black & William, 2001; Wiliam, 2011a). This may be because formative assessment focuses beyond what children learn, to how they learn and how teachers mediate this process (Broadfoot, 2007).

Assessment practices

Multiple assessment approaches used in New Zealand schools can be organised according to whether they are *criterion referenced*, *norm referenced* or *ipsative* assessment.

A criterion-referenced test measures children's performance based on predetermined criteria or learning standards (Bourke & Mentis, 2014). There are clear descriptions of what children are expected to do and know at a specific stage in their education. When we expect six-year-old children to be reading at level fourteen by their sixth birthday (Price Milburn, 2017), we have set an external expectation of reading progress.

Norm-referenced testing is designed to highlight achievement differences so children are ranked from high achievers to low achievers. Schools may use this to decide who qualifies for additional support; for example the three children who rank the lowest in each class may receive additional support from a teacher's aide in specific learning areas. This approach may promote competition over cooperation as grading opens or closes learning pathways for some children (Monchinski, 2010). Norm-referenced tests do not provide any information about what the child has learned in the area tested. National Standards are an example of norm-referenced assessment, with children ranked in the learning areas of English and Mathematics and Statistics (Ministry of Education, 2010a).

An increasing awareness of the importance of culture and prior experiences on children's learning resulted in the development of ipsative assessment. A child's learning is recognised by comparing current progress with previous examples of their learning (Bourke & Mentis, 2014). Children are encouraged to take some responsibility and share their learning with the teacher. Recognising their progress may support children's identity as capable learners, as evidence of learning is collected and revisited over time. Ipsative

assessment can be motivational and positive. Narrative assessment is an example of ipsative assessment.

Tension within assessment

Much more is expected of assessment now than at any time in the past. Assessment has become the pressure point in schools expected to raise standards. No recognition is given to children's social, emotional and creative achievements (Black-Hawkins, 2010; Broadfoot, 2007; Torrance, 2001). The Ministry of Education (2011b) envisions a school assessment system where every child is able to progress as far as possible in the way that most suits their needs; where the role of assessment is understood; and where all participants in the assessment processes work together within and between learning communities. There is tension between assessment theory and the outcomes resulting from mandated assessment processes (Hipkins & Hodgen, 2011; New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011; Thrupp & White, 2013). In some instances, assessment outcomes determine whether school management welcome children's ongoing presence at school. While this has long been a concern for disabled children at secondary school, National Standards mean this is becoming increasingly problematic for primary school children (McIlroy, 2006; New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011; Thrupp & White, 2013).

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand have specific responsibilities related to assessment. Their roles include accountability and improvement functions with the aim of supporting quality school systems. A growing emphasis on collating data has resulted in changes to the registered teacher criteria with an increased focus on teachers' ability to analyse and use children's assessment information (Education Review Office, 2012d, 2015d, 2016; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010).

The Education Review Office (2015a) recognised equity and excellence as major challenges for the 'increasingly diverse student populations' in the New Zealand education system, and turned to assessment to provide benchmarks and standards to be attained. Some groups of children are disadvantaged by many standard assessment processes, with

particular attention drawn to Maori , Pasifika, and disabled children (Donaldson, 2012; Education Review Office, 2015b; Frengley-Vaipuna, Kupu-MacIntyre, & Riley, 2011; Glynn, Cavanagh, Macfarlane, & Macfarlane, 2011; Mahuika et al., 2011; Ministry of Education, 2014; Smith, 2012). Many Maori children have a cultural view and experience of the world that differs from their non-Maori peers, which means predetermined curriculum and assessment may bear little relevance to their knowledge, beliefs and aspirations. When schools develop a culturally responsive classroom curriculum, they may struggle to make sense of mandated assessment practices (Macfarlane, 2004; Mahuika et al., 2011).

Challenges within assessment

When we acknowledge teaching and learning as interactive and personal, we recognise assessment as far more than a technical aspect of teaching, but rather a deeply social and interpersonal activity (Black & William, 2001). Assessment necessarily requires judgements; however judgements that are based on arbitrary criteria or standards are at risk of the standards becoming a planned aspect of teaching. A normative approach to assessment affirms and reproduces specific knowledge and ideas, and validates these at the expense of others. It generally fails to address the cultural capital children bring to school and does not address diversity within learning (May, n.d.a.; Taras, 2009). An increased focus on normative testing has been shown to narrow curricular focus in primary schools in New Zealand to the learning objectives within English and mathematics and statistics, while learning areas including the arts, science, health and physical education have become increasingly marginalised. For many children and teachers, this takes the joy and passion out of teaching and learning (Macfarlane, 2004; Macfarlane & Margrain, 2011; May, n.d.a.; Purpel, 1989; Wink, 2011).

The ability to critique assessment practices that may be detrimental to teaching and learning requires the development of teachers' classroom assessment skills and knowledge (Gipps, 1994; 2002). Power relationships that exist within education hierarchies can make it difficult or unsafe for teachers to challenge imposed structures. Effective change within school systems and processes is best achieved slowly through professional development that builds on good practice embedded in meaningful relationships. Most school change occurs without any consultation with children. More equitable ways of working could

include children's voices when thinking about assessment policy and practice (Black & William, 2001).

Effective assessment

Effective assessment concerns technical aspects of collecting and interpreting data, but equally concerns collaborative and reciprocal learning between teachers and children and responding to the uniqueness of children in a range of learning, cultural and community contexts (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Assessment that is interactive is empowering and can support the development of teachers' and children's identities. Assessment can only do so effectively if the conditions that lead to labelling, ranking and limiting learning opportunities of both children and teachers are recognised and reduced (Bourke et al., 2011; Broadfoot, 2007; Harlen, 2003).

A focus solely on raising standards is different from a focus on supporting teachers and children to improve learning opportunities in the classroom. Assessment is more effective when it supports active engagement, motivation, self-confidence and relationships with others (Black & William, 2001; Broadfoot, 2007). The DANZ Report (Directions for Assessment in New Zealand, 2009) recommended that the most effective assessment processes in New Zealand schools recognise that learning outcomes very much depend on the individual, and that children vary considerably in their dispositions, experiences and motivations (Flockton, 2012). Absolum et al. (2007) identify nine educational imperatives to support quality assessment:

- *curriculum, learning and assessment (attending to the wide range of purposes for learning and on ways of thinking about learning within the New Zealand Curriculum)*
- *attending to the needs of all students (inclusive practice)*
- *greater engagement (linking to children's lives beyond school)*
- *longer term outcomes of learning (developing capabilities for lifelong learning)*
- *greater attention to the effects of assessments (not self-justifying but building on strengths and successes)*
- *schooling as partnership (valuing the sharing of information between home and school)*
- *standards and progressions (rich descriptions of learning over time and clearly defined indicators of achievement)*

- *assessment processes are educative (multiple sources of evidence to enable rich interpretation and valid decision-making)*
- *agencies and schools as adaptive learning systems (open and trusting knowledge-based strategies)*

(Absolum, Flockton, Hipkins & Reid 2007, p.7-9 in Flockton, 2012).

These imperatives focus attention on the broader aspects of assessment over time with a range of participants.

Teacher role in assessment

Effective assessment occurs within the teacher-child relationship. This means the role of the teacher in getting to know children as individuals and as class members is fundamental to quality assessment practice (Earl & Giles, 2011). Referring to the New Zealand Curriculum, “assessment for the purposes of improving student learning is best understood as an ongoing process that arises out of the interaction between teaching and learning” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 39). A strength of assessment pedagogy that separates New Zealand from many other countries is the focus on creating assessment capable children who will become motivated and effective, self-regulated learners (Booth, Hill, & Dixon, 2014; Flockton, 2012).

A number of attributes contribute to teachers being assessment capable. Teachers are the leaders of teaching and learning in the classroom, and assessment processes embedded in classroom practice value teachers’ deep knowledge of the curriculum. Assessment-capable teachers seek opportunities for ongoing relevant professional development. In their assessment outcomes, they include evidence of learning noted by a range of people across contexts and share the information learned with all team members. Children are active participants in this process. Teachers care about the children and the effects assessment can have on them and work to create a classroom culture where risk-taking and creativity are valued and mistakes are recognised as opportunities for ongoing learning.

Assessment-capable teachers are competent to choose assessment approaches that recognise achievement and best support ongoing learning (Hollingsworth, 1992). They value observation, listening and reflect on what they notice and how they respond to this.

They recognise and reflect on their subjectivities and how this impacts on their assessment decisions (Absolum et al., 2009; Biklen, 2000; Booth et al., 2014; Flockton, 2012; Hipkins, 2010b; Scott, Webber, Aitken, & Lupart, 2011).

Children's role in assessment

Currently in New Zealand, quality assessment pedagogy is challenged as the most important assessment decisions are made by adults on behalf of children. When teachers do involve children, it tends to be in low-stakes assessment and to occur incidentally and informally. When the child is recognised as able to provide valuable information about their learning, and their thinking is recorded in a way they can access it, they can see that others value their thinking (Boardman, 2007).

Self-assessment

Authentic voice is visible within children's self-assessment (Black & William, 2001). Children may draw on work samples and interactions with peers to develop a deeper understanding of their learning. Their identity as learners grows from their ability to monitor and assess their own progress (Absolum et al., 2009; Flockton, 2012; Hipkins, 2007b). This involves children understanding learning objectives, recognising quality, and having access to resources that support them to identify next learning steps. Some children can assess their learning best when evidence of capability is captured on film, through photographs, drawings and audio files. Children may not read words but can read visuals as text and may meaningfully assess their learning in this way. Self-assessment has been shown to increase children's agency, motivation and improve learning, as they become more skilled in accessing, interpreting and using information from meaningful assessment (Absolum et al., 2009; Wiliam, 2011a). Sociocultural understandings of teaching and learning recognise that children may demonstrate uneven patterns of capability. For some children, learning demonstrated on one day may not be visible the next. Classroom culture that supports collaboration over competition, supports children to become agentic learners, as recognising capability is made visible through the support of teachers, peers and in some cases technology (Absolum et al., 2009; Bourke & Mentis, 2013; Flockton, 2012; Sadler, 1989; Wansart, 2003). The New Zealand Curriculum highlights the need for

children to develop skills to assess their own work and also that of their peers (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Peer assessment

Peer assessment involves children collaborating and sharing their learning, giving meaningful feedback and making constructive comments (Black & William, 2001; Dixon, 2011). In sharing the assessment process, children may develop a deeper understanding of learning as they recognise different approaches others may bring to a similar task. Children benefit from explicit teaching about providing useful feedback and from access to exemplars which demonstrate what achieving the criteria can look like (Dixon, 2011; Sadler, 1987). The social nature of this formative approach supports communities where power structures are more devolved, and where children learn to relate responsibly and thoughtfully with their peers (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Bourke & Mentis, 2010). Success of peer assessment requires a safe environment where children trust and respect each other, and where teachers demonstrate a commitment to shared responsibility for learning (Dixon, 2011).

Portfolios

Portfolios contain authentic samples of children's work collected over time and across learning areas. Children often share responsibility for creating and presenting the portfolio. Children are actively engaged in their assessment and are encouraged to think and talk about the learning evident in the work samples (Bourke et al., 2011). Portfolios can be used in conjunction with planning meetings such as IEPs so that children, educators and family have the opportunity to discuss successes and plan for future learning together. Portfolios are often created online, enabling others from outside of the school to add information about successes beyond the classroom. Portfolios are an opportunity for children and teachers to work closely together, co-constructing learning and assessment planning.

Assessment in primary schools in New Zealand

A suite of assessment tools are readily available for use in primary schools and may be utilised as part of a school programme or as needed by teachers to clarify certain aspects of teaching and learning. The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars are selected examples of

children's work that show learning and achievement in relation to national curriculum levels (Ministry of Education, 2016a). Teachers use the exemplars to make judgements about their children's work by comparing it against the National Standards shown in the exemplars. National Standards is the only mandated form of assessment required of all primary schools by the Ministry of Education (2010a).

National Standards

In 2010, in response to the incoming government's education policy, the Ministry of Education introduced National Standards for children in years one to eight in New Zealand English medium schools. From 2012 Boards of Trustees were required to include the numbers and proportions of children *at, above, below* or *well below* the prescribed standards in their annual reports (Ministry of Education, 2010a). This led to concern that league tables would be developed and shared amongst schools, creating unhealthy competition among teachers, within and between schools, and damaging a profession that relies on cooperative sharing of resources and knowledge to support learning outcomes (New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011). While the Ministry of Education prioritises assessment approaches that improve teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2011b), National Standards are frequently used summatively and can damage children's identity as capable learners (New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011; Thrupp & White, 2013).

The standards stipulate expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics (Ministry of Education, 2009b, 2009d, 2010a). Parents were promised regular assessment in plain English designed to improve achievement levels. For children identified as not meeting those levels, schools were promised targeted funding would be made available. Most schools were already using a raft of standardised assessment processes and school reporting systems to inform parents of children's progress prior to the introduction of national standards (Hipkins & Hodgen, 2011).

A number of challenges are identified in relation to a national testing system. Tests are designed to identify whether predetermined expectations of learning have been met, and it is assumed that if results show improvement then the quality of teaching and learning in

the classroom has improved. However, testing on such a large scale measures a small sample of the whole curriculum and such test results bear little correlation to the complexity of teaching and learning in the classroom (Darr, 2011; Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011; Torrance, 2014). Following concern in relation to reporting of standards to parents, the Ministry of Education stated schools did not have to use the *At, Above, Below, or Well Below* scale but required children's achievement in relation to the standards be clearly conveyed (Thrupp & Willmott, 2003). "For students who will make progress, but will not make a year's progress in a year, a personalised, more fine-grained reporting approach is likely to be needed to ensure progress can be seen and celebrated" (Ministry of Education, 2010a). This statement gives cause for alarm. The progress a child makes in a year is a year's progress for that child. Within a narrowed assessment focus, capability may go unrecognised and teachers may be less likely to respond creatively to children's potential in the high stakes learning areas of English and mathematics and statistics. The plan for a 'more fine-grained reporting approach' has not as yet been realised.

There is a disconnect between the nature of standards-based assessment and what many teachers and employers value, which includes creativity and innovation, critical thinking, collaboration, teamwork, citizenship and self-management (Drummond, 2008; Torrance, 2014). While accreditation remains an individual, portable and internationally acceptable outcome of assessment, developing more flexible, creative possibilities for assessment will remain challenging.

Assessment outcomes

Authentic assessment approaches identify individual strengths, learning within a range of contexts, and children's identity as learners, and as such respect teachers' recognition of learning (Boardman, 2007; Bourke et al., 2011; Carr, 2006; Cowie, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2007). Delandshere suggests we can think about assessment not in terms of specific competencies but as a 'complex performance', where many aspects of learning come together to create a big picture understanding. "While individual parts may be singled out for specific attention, separate and isolated assessments of these are likely to misrepresent the overall learning, especially when they are reported in ways that strip

away the context of the learning being demonstrated” (Delandshire, 2001 in Hipkins, 2007a, p. 6).

A narrow assessment focus means that learning occurring across multiple contexts may not be recognised. There is a risk that disabled children who may not demonstrate a specific competency may be seen as incompetent by some teachers whose teaching may then align with that belief (Broadfoot, 2007; Morton, 2012). The idea of incompetency challenges the belief that assessment must do no harm (Biklen & Kliever, 2006; Macfarlane, 2013; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995). When teachers recognise and value capability they may feel conflicted by outcomes of narrow assessment criteria.

Teachers

Resulting scores and labels from standardised assessment practices are silent on the quality of teaching and learning, silent on children’s potential, and silent on their ability to transfer learning across contexts. If assessment outcomes are understood as dictating the future, we collude in a deterministic and less hopeful understanding of education. There is a risk that teachers who are focused on assessment outcomes may fail to recognise and celebrate the spontaneous and exciting acts where children demonstrate rich and complex meaning making in their learning (Carr, 2001; Drummond, 2008).

The benefits of formative assessment may be compromised when teachers are under pressure to teach content which is assessed summatively. In a statement contradicted by some assessment policy, the Ministry of Education reminds teachers that to achieve valued outcomes for children we need to “assess what we value rather than narrow our focus to value what we assess” (2011b, p. 18).

Children

Judgements made when assessing children ideally arise from close observation and careful analysis of learning. This information is then invested into improving curriculum, pedagogy and relationships (Drummond, 2008; Morton, 2012). Such practice supports a pedagogy of hope and a belief in capability (Freire, 1992; Wansart, 1995). If children’s work is compared with their own previous efforts, then all can demonstrate learning progress (Crooks, 2008). If outcomes of standardised formal assessments are made public, children

who may not be ranked highly may be led to believe they lack ability, that there is no way of escaping their position in the pecking order and it is not worth them investing effort in learning. Alternatively, assessment approaches that foster a culture of success support the belief that all children can achieve (Black & William, 2001).

Disabled children

Within a system of competitive individualism, children's 'good' assessment results add value to a school that competes for business on the basis of published results (Black-Hawkins, 2010; Slee, 2014). Disabled children, who may not have 'good' assessment results, may not be valued and may even be considered an undesirable cost. It may be suggested to families that the local school is not the best place for their disabled child, and they might like to look elsewhere for more suitable schooling settings (Slee, 2011).

Assessment outcomes for disabled children are often invisible (Education Review Office, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c), except when used as a gatekeeper to access a limited pool of resources and support (Bourke & Mentis, 2013; Bourke et al., 2011). Some diagnostic tests designed to assess disabled children result in attaching labels such as 'severe developmental delay', despite diagnostic assessments not being formally administered. Often such assessments require children to participate in ways in which they are not physically able, or to follow complex instructions that leave them unable to demonstrate their capabilities (Guerin, 2015; McIlroy, 2006; Morton, 2012).

Families

Sociocultural ways of working recognise the centrality of family and community to a child's learning. For parents to participate and actively support their children's education, quality reporting and open communication can provide meaningful information about progress and ongoing learning (Absolum et al., 2009; Wills et al., 2014). Reports given to families that focus on levels and educational jargon reinforce teacher power and limit opportunities for caring respectful relationships (Kluth, 2003; Macartney, 2014; Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 1995; Noddings, 2012). For disabled children, a school report may be full of "well below", an outcome that reveals nothing about learning or potential. Many teachers recognise this reporting challenge and some create an alternative report form for disabled

children. While this may demonstrate a child's learning, it affirms some children as less capable and therefore excluded from the school reporting processes. An alternative view would be to consider a reporting system that celebrates the learning of all children.

Narrative assessment

Narrative assessment is an approach that recognises the learning of all children. In this section, I present literature related to the formative use of narrative assessment, describe a narrative assessment project undertaken for the Ministry of Education in New Zealand, and consider challenges related to this assessment approach (Bourke & Mentis, 2010; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2009c; Moore et al., 2008; Morton, 2012; Morton, McMenamin, et al., 2012).

Describing narrative assessment

Teachers in New Zealand schools have access to many assessment approaches and tools, all of which can provide information to build a comprehensive narrative of a child's learning (Bourke et al., 2011). Narrative assessment recognises and describes authentic learning in relation to the Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). It is the antithesis of learning goals identified by adults to be reached by children one by one, like a pathway of stepping stones. Narrative assessment does not seek to quantify children's learning against each other or against predetermined measures (Drummond, 2008).

The concept of 'learning stories' was developed in New Zealand by Carr (1998) in response to sociocultural views of teaching, learning and assessment, where responsive and reciprocal relationships are prioritised (Carr & Lee, 2012). Learning stories validate children's progress within the early childhood curriculum - Te Whāriki - and latterly within the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Carr, 2001; Morton, McMenamin, et al., 2012). A narrative assessment approach has key characteristics. Narratives of children's learning include multiple voices and relationships across contexts, over time and of the moment. The uniqueness of each child is recorded in an authentic story of learning linked to the New Zealand Curriculum and informing next learning steps. Narrative assessments celebrate children's strengths and interests, passion for learning and recognise their perseverance, determination and courage (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012; Drummond, 2008; Gunn & de

Vocht van Alphen, 2010; Hatherly & Sands, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2007; Williamson et al., 2006).

Narrative assessments are used formatively when they connect with previous learning and inform future pathways. In this way they are an enabling and inclusive approach to assessment. This relates to teaching as inquiry and positions the child as an active learner (Ministry of Education, 2007). Narrative assessments may focus on a specific goal, a learning area or a particular 'one-off' achievement (Margrain, 2010). Narrative assessments often include photographs or film and may include content from a teacher, a family member, a teacher's aide, a therapist or from children. They may be written on a template or be creatively developed as the writer chooses (Moore et al., 2008) (Appendix twenty five). Narrative assessments enable documentation of capability across contexts but depend on the writers' willingness and ability to recognise strengths and capabilities where they may not be immediately visible (Margrain, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2009c).

Writing narrative assessments encourages teachers to reflect on their practice and on their teaching beliefs (Bourke & Mentis, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2009c). Narrative assessment brings together skills and strengths, combining information to include both formative and summative functions (Bourke & Mentis, 2014; Hatherly & Sands, 2002; Williamson et al., 2006). It enables personalisation of curriculum and of learning, and is therefore particularly suitable for disabled children whose progress can be celebrated and made accessible to all team members (Carr, 2001; Drummond, 2008; Hatherly & Sands, 2002; Margrain, 2010). Sitting with classmates to eat lunch, or sharing a book in the library may not be recognised within standard assessments, but may represent significant progress in terms of communication and reading within the learning area of English (Guerin, 2015; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014). Narrative assessment is described as a rich, respectful, caring, socially just approach that enables the complexity of teaching and learning to be made visible and celebrated (Margrain, 2013; Moore et al., 2008; Morton, McMenamin, et al., 2012).

Outcomes of narrative assessment

Outcomes of narrative assessment can be described in relation to children, to teachers, and to families. Dunn (2004) suggests narrative assessment supports the development of inclusive practice in schools as teachers increasingly see the child and not the disability. Narrative counterbalances a pull towards deficit thinking, which is ever a threat when achievement standards increasingly impact on teaching and learning. Because narrative assessment includes multiple perspectives, it can be a vehicle to bring people together. Narrative assessment is the essence of a sociocultural way of working.

Narrative assessments begin with the understanding that all children are capable learners and, as the process of writing and sharing foregrounds this perspective, teachers may actively seek occasions for children to demonstrate their capabilities (Hipkins, 2007b). As children become more aware of each other's strengths, there may be increased opportunities for children to develop friendships and support each other both socially and in their learning (Carr & Lee, 2012; Smith et al., 2012). When teachers talk with children about their strengths, children are less likely to see themselves as incapable and more readily develop a positive learner identity. Recognition of capability has potential for lifelong learning and opportunities for success and belonging beyond school (Marshall, Hocking, & Wilson, 2006; Moore et al., 2008; Picken, 2012). In the process of writing narrative assessments, families are usually invited to share knowledge and engage as part of a team supporting learning. This sharing process values deep knowledge of the child and enables teachers to see children 'through different eyes' (Carr, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2009c). Some parents report that it is uncommon for them to receive positive assessments in relation to their disabled child and share narrative assessments proudly with family and friends (McIlroy & Guerin, 2014; Moore et al., 2008).

Narrative assessment enables teachers to document learning within levels. It recognises that some children may work within Level One of the New Zealand Curriculum in some learning areas for most of their schooling, but also recognises children's particular strengths and capabilities that may place them at higher levels in some learning areas (Guerin, 2015; Margrain, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2007). They enable teachers to look

back and forward to create a bigger picture of a learning trajectory. Recognising continuity supports an understanding of capability (Carr, 2009; Carr & Lee, 2012; Morton, 2012).

Curriculum Exemplars Project for Learners with Special Education Needs

In 2007, the Ministry of Education commissioned a project titled ‘The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars for Learners with Special Education Needs’, which was carried out by a team at the University of Canterbury (Ministry of Education, 2009c, 2010b). It involved the creation of curriculum exemplars and an accompanying guide “for all teachers whose classes include students who, throughout most of their time at school, are working within Level One of The New Zealand Curriculum” (Morton, McMenamin, et al., 2012, p. 117).

The project responded to an interest in exploring the difference a narrative approach to assessment could make to disabled children and to their teachers and families. It explored potential to notice, understand, communicate and celebrate the capabilities of disabled children so they could be recognised as learners (Moore et al., 2008). The Ministry of Education’s project outcomes included demonstrating the relevance of the New Zealand Curriculum for all children; raising expectations of children; focusing on the key competencies within the learning areas of the New Zealand Curriculum and demonstrating the complexity of learning within the context of relationships (Morton, McMenamin, et al., 2012). Project members understood a child’s ‘disability’ is not an excuse for not experiencing success in the Curriculum. The resulting exemplars demonstrated ways teachers had adapted Carr’s learning story model to demonstrate learning in personalised and holistic ways (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012; Morton & McMenamin, 2011).

The design of this project provided a professional development opportunity for teachers, advisers and senior University staff to work collaboratively to further develop their own learning and build systems knowledge. This co-constructed, inquiry based model of professional development is more likely to embed new learning and change than a model where material is absorbed as an expert delivers (Margrain, 2013; Timperley et al., 2007).

Reviewing the Narrative Assessment Project

Innovations that strengthen formative assessment practices have resulted in significant learning for educators and positive assessment outcomes for children (Carr & Lee, 2012). Project participants in the New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars for Learners with Special Education Needs project (2009) said they saw the disabled children in their class “through different eyes”, became able “to focus on small steps within the big picture”, recognised that narrative assessment was “about individual strength and about community” and found “renewed confidence in my judgement” (Ministry of Education, 2009c, p. 30). In order for learning gains such as these to be maintained and developed following investment in large projects like the Exemplars for Learners with Special Education Needs (2009), it is important there are sustained programmes of ongoing professional development (Carr & Lee, 2012). Without support, the essence and benefits of new learning may become diluted as teachers revert to historical and dominant ways of working (Ainscow, 2015; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008; Timperley et al., 2007).

In 2010, Bourke and Mentis evaluated the Narrative Assessment Exemplars (Ministry of Education, 2009c) created to support professional development and learning for teachers. While not all narratives included photographs or visual data, it was suggested this strengthened the assessments. Bourke and Mentis (ibid.) recognised the collaborative nature of the approach as children, educators and family members contributed valuable learning data to strengthen the narratives. The incorporation of multiple voices and ways of knowing the children supported teachers in their role of learning analysis .

Learning a new assessment approach requires a time investment for team members to trial, reflect, write and analyse. Carr (2012) describes narrative assessments as an approach requiring greater input of time than other forms of assessment. Schools make judgements in relation to time, value and priority, but it may be that in prioritising one form of assessment another approach is let go. Without a school management commitment to creating space for educators to learn about and trial narrative assessment, teachers motivated by the approach may over time “opt out or divert responsibility to a teacher’s aide” (Bourke & Mentis, 2010, p. 5).

The resources developed within the project were later subject to a small trial; however the ongoing professional development required to support the trial was absent. Narrative assessment was recognised as a sound teaching and learning process with the ability to support a positive learner identity for disabled children. An ongoing commitment to developing and refining the approach was recommended in the evaluative report (Bourke & Mentis, 2010).

Informing the Research Field in Relation to Narrative Assessment

It is hoped this research will add knowledge to the areas of assessment, teaching and learning; particularly for children whose learning is often invisible within current assessment practices.

This thesis may provide material that could encourage educators to reflect on the purpose of assessment, and how choices made about processes impact on how we think about teachers, children, and capability. Research outcomes may support teachers to explore the formative use of narrative assessment as an approach that attends to children's strengths and successes, and promotes confident, collaborative teaching and learning to create more inclusive classrooms and schools.

Summary

This chapter has presented literature positioning this work within DSE. The understanding of social justice in this work foregrounded the importance of child voice. Teaching and learning was unpacked with a focus on effective pedagogy. The chapter explored the theory of assessment, attending in particular to narrative assessment as central in this research.

In chapter three the theoretical framework used to support the study's research questions is described. Methodological and ethical content is presented. The children at the centre of this research are introduced.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, the position of teacher-researcher and the tensions inherent in this role are considered. The theoretical framework used to support the research questions is described. An understanding of critical inquiry and how it supports this work is discussed. The decision to utilise a qualitative methodology is explained. Critical and visual ethnography, which are central to supporting the critical intent of this work, are also discussed. The research timeline is presented, data sources are described, and grounded theory as the approach to data analysis is discussed. Ethical considerations for this research project are explained. The children who are the focus of this research are introduced. An outline of the findings chapters is presented and aligned with the key literature that provided the framework for data analysis.

Teachers as researchers

Hargreaves (2007) suggests we might think about research in education by comparing it to research in medicine. Medical research is often carried out by medical practitioners. In contrast only a small proportion of education research is carried out by practising teachers (Kinchloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2012). Most educational research is carried out by academics (Hargreaves, 2007). Academic research about teaching appearing in academic journals seldom appears in teacher staffrooms. This suggests a disconnect between research and praxis (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Kincheloe, 2012). There are challenges in both how research projects are designed - particularly in relation to who does the research - and in how research outcomes are disseminated to teachers. At times, valuable research outcomes have limited impact in schools (Hargreaves, 2007; Wiliam, 2011b). Hargreaves (2007) suggests a commitment to evidence-based research and full partnership with teachers is essential if research in education is to have an impact on educational outcomes. This involves restructuring the process that determines what research is undertaken, where and who with, and aligning this with professional development opportunities available to teachers.

Current effects of neoliberalism have resulted in increased regulation of schools, which can mean that teacher knowledge becomes less valued and educational experts are seen as being outside of schools. Kincheloe (2012) states that teachers must have a greater voice in contributing to knowledge, and that their skills within a pedagogical culture deserve greater respect. When aspects of teaching practice become increasingly rigid, such as the National Standards assessment process, teachers are potentially “infantilised” and the curriculum “stupidified”, as teachers are seen as receivers rather than creators of knowledge (Kinchloe et al., 2012, p. 18).

When teachers are involved in educational research where reflexive praxis and creative thinking is prioritised, outcomes may provide grounds to challenge assumptions and create change (Fiorentini & Crecci, 2015; Hanson, 2013). An advantage of teachers researching in schools is they are research “natives” who are often perceived to understand “the classroom reality” and are able to “participate, observe and blend into school situations” where they are “less likely to alter the research setting and more likely to win the trust of respondents” (Hanson, 2013, p. 391). When teachers are researching locally, knowledge of their own school communities can help gain rich data, as an insider position can be “key to delving into the hidden crevices of the organization” (Labaree, 2002, p. 98).

My position in the research

This research project was carried out at Beach Drive School (pseudonym), an urban primary school in Aotearoa New Zealand where the majority of the families identified as Pakeha. I was employed at Beach Drive School as a specialist teacher for three and a half days every week, and had been in that role for a few years. The roles of teacher and researcher were intertwined, with each informing the other. I reflected on my roles and how they may have impacted on my teaching and research practices. Within teaching teams we frequently engaged in incidental pedagogical discussions around teaching and learning, the content of which often became research data. While teaching, the context of interactions and conversations between children provided naturally occurring data. I was careful to conduct planned research interviews outside of scheduled teaching time. Without exception, research participants were supportive and generous. I valued the

mutual trust that led easily to in-depth conversations, and I needed to be mindful not to abuse my position.

As a teacher, I had constant access to, and University of Canterbury ethical approval to use a range of teaching artefacts, which added complexity and richness to the research context. I recognised the value in being immersed in the research field where there were ongoing contextual opportunities for reflecting on the research questions and on the integrity and credibility of my research processes. I recognise that intimate knowledge of a school may make a researcher blind to everyday structures and processes that an external researcher may notice. This presents a limitation to researching from within (DeLyser, 2001; Labaree, 2002; Limerick, Burgess-Limerick, & Grace, 1996; Salkind, 2012).

I had to consider how teachers, children and families in the school community understood my role as a teacher-researcher, and I endeavoured to work collaboratively and respectfully. I did not take for granted the established relationships and experiences of working together. I hoped to be open minded and not to create expectation or bias or to lead participants during the interview stage of the research (Hanson, 2013). I hoped that my regular presence at school, which meant that there were multiple opportunities to “chat”, would help clarify, challenge, confirm and reconfirm understandings and thus provide rigour within the research process (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015).

Alongside the role of teacher and researcher, I assumed and was ascribed a range of roles. I was a colleague, a friend, a confidante, an adviser, a specialist, a leader, a support person, a mediator, an agitator, an insider and an outsider. The fluidity and multiple aspects of roles occurring simultaneously may have been perceived differently by me and by those with whom I interacted (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

[A collaborative approach to research](#)

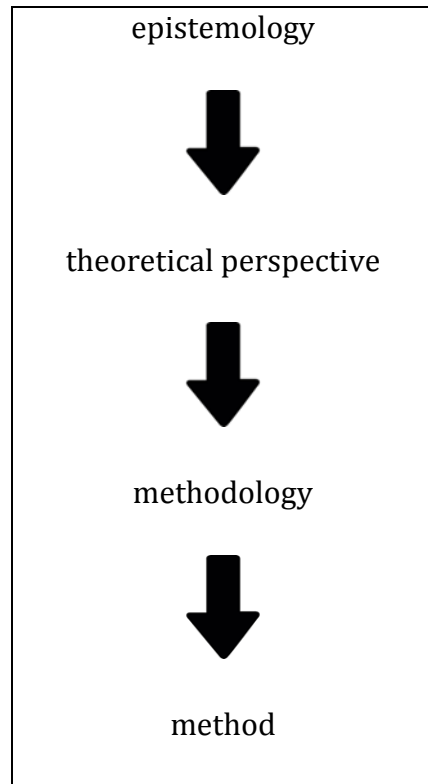
Of central importance to this work was its collaborative intent. My role as researcher was to unpack the potential of narrative assessment by listening to and analysing the rich data provided by the participants.

Participants have shared their knowledge, beliefs and understandings of work that was happening at school. They trusted that I would share this work and that my retelling of their stories would be through our combined perspectives rather than my single view. Collaboration guided all methodological decisions. Listening to all participant voices was a priority in exploring the research questions. We shared a commitment to making sense of attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and outcomes in relation to our experiences of narrative assessment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Given, 2008). As the writer, I am in a powerful and privileged position and ultimately decide on the words recorded on each page (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001). I may not have told each participant's story as they would have chosen, and I recognise there are multiple understandings a reader may ascribe to text.

During the project, participants informally became part of a community of practice where they shared ideas about narrative assessment, children's learning and pedagogical complexities that were part of every teaching day. These casual conversations provided collegial support by strengthening connections resulting from a sense of belonging and shared purpose (Fiorentini & Crecci, 2015; Philippoua, Papademetri-Kachrimanib, & Loucab, 2015). This was a sociocultural way of working that arose organically from collaboration and shared endeavour. Over time, such a group can actively deconstruct knowledge through analysis and reflection, then reconstruct a unique perspective through working collaboratively (Hargreaves, 2007; Philippoua et al., 2015). While the project was local and specific, we all recognised potential for relevance beyond the Beach Drive School community. The ongoing challenge is sharing research outcomes in a way that supports quality practice for educators within a culture of community and belonging for families and children.

Methodological Theory

The methodological theory underpinning this research can be understood as tiers, where each informs the next.



(Crotty, 1998, p. 4)

Figure 1: Methodological theory

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and explores the relationship between the knower and what can be known (Johnson, McGowan, & Turner, 2010). This supports the theoretical perspective which, in this research, is critical inquiry, chosen because of its alignment with Disability Studies in Education. Recognising the nature of knowledge and critical inquiry together supported the decision to use critical and visual ethnography and

narrative as methodologies for this research process. A qualitative method enabled inquiry into diverse and rich data.

Epistemology - Constructionism

Epistemology is a way of explaining how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998). It can be understood as the theory of knowledge (Audi, 2010). An understanding of how knowledge comes to be known impacts on the research design of a project. The epistemological stance in this research is constructionism. Constructionism may be understood as theoretically positioned between objectivism and subjectivism. From an objectivist perspective, understanding is prescribed. A chair, for example, is a known object with a fixed and predetermined meaning. A wheelchair is a chair to support mobility. From a subjectivist perspective, a chair would have no meaning until it is ascribed one by the subject. The meaning of wheelchair is created by the person interacting with the chair. The constructionist perspective would involve understanding the connection between the chair, its location and how it is interacted with by the subject. For example, the wheelchair may be constructed as a means for the subject to join friends to visit a sports stadium and share the experience of a rugby game.

Constructionism suggests that there is no fixed reality waiting to be discovered (Vivien, 1995). Reality exists through people's interactions with each other and with the world (Galbin, 2014). Knowledge varies depending on interpretation but it is always understood within a social context (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism is particularly relevant to this research project, as two core concepts can be recognised as socially constructed. Disability is understood to be socially constructed through interactions between people and contexts. Children's capability is recognised as being constructed through interactions based in part on assessment approaches (Barr & Smith, 2009; Wansart, 2003).

Understanding a range of realities has the potential to unmask the obvious or taken for granted and to reveal avenues for change (Alanan, 2015). As the potential of narrative assessment is explored, constructionism provides an approach to explore discourses that maintain status quo in schools, and to investigate assessment that may support children's belonging at school (Barr & Smith, 2009).

Theoretical perspective- Critical inquiry

This research project is guided by the use of critical theory. Critical theory is a philosophical stance that informs the methodology and provides a context for the research process (Crotty, 1998). Critical theorists often work alongside people to raise consciousness. This enables assumptions to be questioned and critiqued (Carspecken, 2012). Critical theory is concerned with the social construction of experiences and explores how structures simultaneously empower and disempower, and how they create spaces for domination and repression (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Since researchers have been involved in creating these structures, Lather (1992) suggests researchers can deconstruct and reform them in more equitable ways.

Critical theory has a goal of emancipation - both of systems and of people who may be marginalised by them (Goodman, 2014; Leonardo, 2004; Prilleltensky, 2014). The enactment of policies and structures is largely influenced by the language and associated understandings of concepts (Rorty, 1999). In this study, we can think about teachers being marginalised when they lack the support they require to confidently teach all children. Disabled children can be marginalised by imposed systems and structures at school. The historical use of assessment is one of those structures. This study provides an opportunity to think about alternative assessment approaches as current challenges to democratic teaching and learning are investigated.

When people who are marginalised are able to make their voices heard and are listened to, there is potential for taking action that can create spaces for freedom from oppression (Pillay, 2014). From a researcher's perspective, what is important in this project is how we listen to ourselves when we are working with children (Billington, 2014, p. 119). This involves being reflexive of praxis, of how theory aligns with beliefs and how this impacts on the integrity of the research process (Athanasios & Petritsi, 2014).

Sociocultural theory

Within sociocultural theory, meaning is constructed through social engagement. Rather than knowledge existing in the heads of individuals or in the external world, sociocultural theorists understand knowledge and meaning as emerging from the intersection of culture,

experience and relationships. This means that thinking cannot be separated from the historical, institutional and cultural forces that shape it (Habashi, 2005; Jipson & Jipson, 2005; Juzwik, 2006; Traianou, 2007). Culture is a complex term which in this research is understood as the learned social conventions of a group based on perceptions, beliefs, ways of being and implicit and explicit ways of behaving. Cultural competency for teachers means developing understanding and acquiring ways of working that support them to better understand cultural diversity within their classrooms and how they can use this knowledge to develop best outcomes for children (Durie, 2003; Gaffney, 2014). Culture includes artefacts and materials such as text (Thomas, 1993). Teaching is recognised as a cultural activity (Macartney & Morton, 2009; Rogoff, 2003).

Within sociocultural theory the notion of fixed intelligence and its role in determining learning has no place. This means there can be no ceiling to learning and every individual has open ended potential as their identity unfolds, develops and is nurtured (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Biklen & Kliever, 2006; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995). Within sociocultural theory, we recognise "students learn as they engage in shared activities and conversations with other people" and that "teachers encourage this process by cultivating the class as a learning community" where everyone "including the teacher is a learner" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 34). Sociocultural theory is embedded in inquiry-based learning where engaged participation is prioritized and the relationships between teacher and children are interdependent and not of fixed dependency (Ballard, 2003b; Gipps, 2002; James, 2008; Skidmore, 2002).

As children engage in authentic tasks beyond their current level of competence, learning is supported by a more expert other who helps to scaffold new learning (James, 2006). Vygotsky (1978, p.87 in Skidmore, 2002, p. 125) states that "what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow". Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads to it (Fottland & Matre, 2005, p. 517). This does not mean the goal of learning together is independence; rather learning is an interdependent activity based on ongoing connectedness and relationships.

Sociocultural theory supports communities of practice where teaching and learning extends beyond the classroom to value and include the voices of families and the wider community (Freire, 1998; Giroux, 2003; Luluvein, 2010; Neale, 2004; Slee, 2003). This way of working locates expertise in a shifting landscape depending on the learning outcome, and processes often appear messy and unpredictable. In trying to make sense of this approach to learning, ethnographic methods may help to unravel the complexity of teaching practice (Traianou, 2007).

Narrative inquiry

This project researches narrative assessment. The project utilises narrative inquiry as a means to understand the complexity within the narrative assessments and as an approach to understand the data gathered during the research interviews. In essence, it is a narrative about the use of narrative to explore an approach to assessment.

Narrative inquiry is an interpretivist methodology based on understanding contextualised, personal experiences that foreground diverse voices. These experiences are gathered and unpacked to explore a range of perspectives on a research issue and may provide insight into emergent policy, practices and theories (Bell, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Goodley, 2004; Schaafsma & Vinz, 2007). Soto (2005, p.10) recognises that “narrative inquiry with a critical component thrives on the passionate involvement and commitment of the researchers”, with the intention of cultivating possibility and hope of different ways of seeing, understanding and acting.

Narrative inquiry is powerful in its potential to connect human experience through stories. In many ways we come to know the world through our experiences and our stories, and we learn about ourselves through stories of our experiences and of the world. Narratives are able to shape and portray experiences simultaneously (Schaafsma & Vinz, 2007). Benjamin (1973 in Lewis, 2011, p. 507) suggests that “a story preserves and concentrates its strengths and is capable of releasing it even after a long time.” Through narratives, people may be moved beyond the text to take action (Anderson, 1989; Smith-Chandler & Swart, 2014).

Narrative inquiry allows hidden assumptions to be identified. It explores the temporary notion of experience, recognising that interpretation changes over time (Bell, 2002; Rosiek & Atkinson, 2007). Interpretation is dependent on the research focus and the epistemological and theoretical understandings of the person unpacking the narrative. A driving force behind narrative inquiry in some educational research is that it provides a way to include stories that may have been traditionally excluded. This has particular relevance for disabled people, whose narratives may often have gone untold.

Within narrative inquiry, the role of the researcher is to take the stories and place them into a larger narrative to help tell a bigger story. In this process, the researcher is imposing their meaning and value on the experiences of the participants. While efforts are made to check with participants that ongoing analysis and construction of theory is correct, the participants' stories are never completely free of researcher interpretation. In effect, this is re-storying the story and the impact of this can be powerful in many ways (Bell, 2002). An ethic of care as a teacher and a researcher is given to hearing many voices and many stories (Noddings, 2012). Narrative is not an approach suitable for all educational inquiry. It takes considerable time and commitment to hear, record and share stories. It would not be practical with large numbers of participants. Narrative inquiry requires close collaboration and relationships based on trust and respect. Storying the stories says as much about the researcher as it does the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, Connelly, & Chan, 2002; Schaafsma & Vinz, 2011).

Research methodology

The research methodology is the plan of action that determines the particular choice of method considered most appropriate to exploring the research questions (Crotty, 1998). In this research, a critical qualitative methodological approach was chosen to explore how families, children and teachers made sense of narrative assessment to support ongoing learning. As the participants shared their thinking and reflected on their understandings, they too could be considered critical researchers (Morrell, 2012). Critical qualitative research is concerned with the interweaving of knowledge, theory and practice. Together, these connections have the potential to raise consciousness and support change

(Carspecken, 2012). Critical qualitative research involves advocacy and examines the systems and processes that marginalise or render some voices less valued or silenced (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Shields, 2012).

Qualitative research

While qualitative research has been conducted for over a century, the term was not used in the social sciences until the late 1960s (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Qualitative researchers are concerned with making meaning, often in complex social situations (Taylor et al., 2015). Qualitative researchers work from the premise that social reality is continuously constructed and reconstructed by participants in local contexts. Qualitative research involves direct contact with participants, which can empower individuals to share their stories and minimise power relations. As multiple forms of descriptive data are collected, researchers may become personally involved with the research participants, sometimes to the point of assuming a caring attitude (Grumet, 1990, 2010). Data analysis is inductive as hypotheses are not established prior to the research, which is usually initiated by an open-ended question. An inductive method of analysing data means theory emerges from the bottom up and through connections made within data. Care is taken to maintain participants' voices through co-construction and frequently shared reflections on how meaning is understood. Qualitative methodologies are not rigidly structured and, as the research continues, questions may change, data may be collected differently and participant involvement may vary. Qualitative researchers try to create a rich and multifaceted picture of the study topic by including multiple perspectives and by identifying complex interactions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Munford & Sanders, 2001). Deep analysis of research text enables interpretations that can be complex and contradictory as accounts of research are always "open to revision and reinterpretation" (Dowse, 2009, p. 151). The willingness of the researcher to co-construct and reconstruct understandings supports an ethical research process that is reflexive, collaborative and not based on hierarchal power structures (Etherington, 2007; Harrison et al., 2001).

Ethnography

The qualitative approach used in this research is ethnography. Ethnography enables the range of voices prioritised in the research to be visible in the writing. Etymologically 'ethnography' means writing about a people (Hammersley, 2010) and can be described as "a way of being, seeing, thinking and writing", and as such is not bound by rigid conventions (Mills & Morton, 2013, p. 3).

Imagination can play a significant role within ethnographic methodology, which goes beyond understanding the culture within the research field to suggesting possibilities for a more just and interconnected way of being (Hayes, Sameshima, & Watson, 2015).

"Sometimes you have to show people the world you want them to see before they can believe it's possible" (Blake, 2014 in Hayes et al., 2015, p. 425). Through imagination, differences are crossed, and a global view of a world where compassion, empathy and love are encompassing values may be envisaged.

Ethnographic method pays attention to what people say and do and, as such, involves researchers investing personally in the field. Working together requires empathy and trust, and respect for how people might feel as a result of the research project. Empathy involves 'walking in another's shoes', trying to understand experiences from the perspective of those who live them. Ethnography has potential to uncover perceptions and meanings of people's lived experiences within their cultural context (Crotty, 1998; Filipek, Lovell, McKay, Nixon, & Sun, 2011; Hammersley, 2006; Mills & Morton, 2013), and can be considered both as process and product (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993). "Ethnographic work should aim to be an uncomfortable science" as participants make themselves vulnerable through sharing and through co-constructing meaning (Mills & Morton, 2013, p. 4).

Educational ethnographic study typically involves exploring the interwoven impacts of social, political, community and economic factors in a naturalistic education setting (Hammersley, 2010; Pole & Morrison, 2003). Multiple forms of data are collected to elicit rich information, which is partly analysed through detailed descriptive writing (Delamont, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The researcher consciously suspends assumptions in trying to make sense of the data through different eyes (Davies, 2008; Hammersley, 2010). It is

through writing and trying to make sense of experiences that gaps in knowledge appear, and that which may be taken for granted and therefore invisible becomes visible (Given, 2008; Kinchloe et al., 2012).

Critical ethnography

Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address injustice (Madison, 2005) and can be described as conventional ethnography with a political purpose, which aims to expose power structures through in-depth and sustained relationships in the research setting (Hardcastle, Usher, & Holmes, 2006; Thomas, 1993). "Conventional ethnography describes what is; critical ethnography asks what could be" (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). It seeks to make the unconscious conscious; to identify structural asymmetries, assumptions and patterns of oppression that create powerlessness and minimise the voices of some people (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993). Freire's theory of "conscientization" is a process of raising awareness so that everyday culture and practice are newly understood in relation to the broader social conditions in which they developed and are currently practiced (Bodone & Carspecken, 2005; Carspecken, 2001; Freire, 1998). This research recognises the impact of 'taken for granted' processes and therefore often-invisible impacts of assessment, and inquires into narrative as an assessment approach within a sociocultural context.

Purpose of critical ethnography

Within education, critical ethnography questions beliefs and assumptions with the purpose of making schooling a more democratic and just experience for those who are marginalised through current practice, systems and structures (Anderson, 1989; Freire, 1997; Smyth & McNerney, 2013). Bringing marginalised voices to the fore can unmask repressive practice as a means of invoking social consciousness and educational change within broader structures of social power and control (Mills & Morton, 2013; Stinnett, 2012; Thomas, 1993).

Language is a form of power, because symbolizing events separates and communicates one set of meanings and excludes others. How we 'hear' our data as it speaks to us and how we translate what we have heard into a set of messages for an audience gives the researcher

the power to define and transmit 'reality' (Mills & Morton, 2013). As a consequence, the discourse in which results are written is as important as the language of the analysed field notes (Thomas, 1993).

The idea of value-laden research is the antithesis of objective neutral research. Educational processes and structures are largely politically driven; therefore it makes sense that educational research is similarly political and therefore value-laden (Lather, 1986). This involves working with participants rather than studying them, and enables the spotlight to be kept firmly on how power structures work and may contribute to injustice (Carspecken, 1996, 2001; Crotty, 1998). Researchers do not own the data, as ownership is shared by all participants (Lather, 1992). This means analysis is checked with participants and may reflect multiple understandings of context within a given time (Bodone & Carspecken, 2005).

Within critical ethnography, consideration is given to the research effects on both researcher and participants (Anderson, 1989; Angrosino, 2007). The researcher attempts to escape ideology, biases and historical structures long enough to meaningfully challenge one's own assumptions (Lather, 1992; Stinnett, 2012). The fluidity of the lived experience may alter interpretation as experiences and data are reflected on.

Challenges within critical ethnography

A challenge within critical ethnography is that an "emancipatory intent is no guarantee of an emancipatory outcome" (Lather, 1986, p. 267). Giving voice where it is often unheard may reveal injustices; however that insight does not change reality or help people to improve their situations (Bodone & Carspecken, 2005; Smith, 2012). The research challenge is to consider the next step: how change might be supported in a way that minimises injustice or, in the case of this research, supports inclusive practice or belonging. Within schools, this means thinking about embedding practice and understanding to create sustainable change and emphasising the professional development required to support this. The concept of empowering others through the research process is also challenging, as the concept of empowerment still places someone, in this case myself as researcher, as the person who supposedly knows what it means to empower someone else.

Visual Ethnography

Visual ethnography provided an inclusive approach to accessing and developing understanding about narrative assessment. Like traditional forms of ethnography, the overall goal of visual ethnography is to build understanding alongside people within a cultural context (Pink, 2004, 2007; Rose, 2012). Visual ethnography attempts to capture life as lived with visual shots of ongoing events, roles and behaviours that help the researcher to understand the complex and interrelated realities studied. These visual shots are most likely to be film or photographs. The visuals may be recorded by the researcher, the participants or by both. The range of images used may include maps, charts, drawings or sculptures. Visual ethnography lends itself to creatively exploring lived reality using materials that have significant meaning for participants (Moss, 2008). For example, a patchwork quilt passed down through generations alongside an oral history offers the researcher access to experiences and understanding that may otherwise have remained hidden. Visuals have the potential to not just illustrate but to illuminate social processes, relationships, meanings and events. They offer a deeper layer of text and potentially a different story for the researcher and participants to explore (Given, 2008; Margolis, 1990; Penaloza, 1998; Prosser, 2011).

The incorporation of photographs as visual data in qualitative research has grown significantly over the last two decades (Rose, 2012). This approach creates its own challenges, especially in relation to consent and ethics. While the methodological concepts and theoretical perspectives vary across the fields of social research, there is recognition that use of visuals in research has the potential to enrich our understanding of human experience (Delamont, 2012; Kellock, 2011; Russell, 2007). However, images are never transparent windows into a world and they are never just an illustration. They do not stand alone. They tell part of the story, but meaning may remain obscure until constructed between the researcher and the participants (Moss, 2008; Pink, 2007; Rose, 2012). The particular methodological focus in this research considers photographs as part of a data set that contributes to a richer shared understanding between participants (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, & Radley, 2007; Kellock, 2011).

Supporting methodological inclusion

Since the 1980s, there has been a growing interest in participatory approaches to research that include people with intellectual disabilities (Boxall & Ralph, 2009). It may be that a focus on visual rather than text-based data better supports some disabled people to have greater involvement in research as participants and as co-researchers.

Within education, an increased interest in visual imagery reflects the growth of a visual culture (Russell, 2007). Research that includes children's voice may be more achievable through use of visual rather than or in addition to verbal and written material to capture thoughts and feelings (Somekh, 2009). When children record and share images which are important to them, they are also making visible learning pathways and processes that offer information and direction for future learning (Rinaldi, 2006). Using visuals in research about teaching and learning supports sociocultural ways of working by enabling children and teachers to collect, share and interpret data that portray context and content in multiple ways (Boardman, 2007). Visual ethnography can also help disrupt the imbalance of power that may exist between the researcher and the researched by centering the participants and making relationships visible (Blousteins & Baker, 2003; Kellock, 2011).

Challenge of visual methods

Much of the writing about visual methodologies in social research such as visual ethnography, is concerned with ethical and consensual processes (Burles & Thomas, 2014; Pauwels, 2010; Russell, 2007). When visual ethnographers take photographs and use them in research, they risk exposing the identity of the participants. Concealing identity is done with the intent of protecting those involved and is an accepted part of research protocol. Walford (1991, in Kellock, 2011) questions the extent to which ethnographers have really been able to protect the anonymity of those they research. The necessary contextual detail that is the strength of the methodology means people who wanted to identify the research site could probably do so. An awareness of this can force the researcher to take extra care in detailing research findings.

The internet increasingly makes publishing and viewing of visual data so widely accessible, that using photographs in research findings highlights ethical issues. Gaining informed

consent is particularly important (Boxall & Ralph, 2009). It is suggested that procedures within institutions that set guidelines around publication and the use of visuals in research data have not kept up with the speed of technology that enables easy access to the sharing of visual materials (Pink, 2012). A further challenge around informed consent is that many research projects start out with the intent of exploring a particular phenomenon only to end up doing something different.

In research using visual data, Hodgetts et al. (2007) state participants must understand the purpose of using visual data and give fully informed consent. Data must be confidential, anonymity of participants must be respected and participants must always be protected from harm. In this research, the use of photographs was a process filled with tension. Photographs mostly included recognisable images of research participants. While confidentiality was able to be assured, it was not possible to guarantee anonymity. It is possible to anonymise images by blocking out eyes, obscuring faces or landmarks and blurring any text within the photographs. In some cases obscuring faces may be considered dehumanising and disrespectful. In this research, all participants made a conscious decision and signed a consent form permitting unaltered photographs to be included in published research. It became clear to me that designing research using photographs in ethical ways was a complex and unresolved process. Different people may have different understandings of what ethical practice means in their context and culture. This challenges the idea that there can be one set of rules that define an ethical way to undertake visual ethnographic research (Pink, 2004, 2007; Prosser, 1992; Rose, 2012; Simmonds, Roux, & ter Avest, 2015).

Ethical challenges related to photographic use is further compounded when the research participants are children identified as having an intellectual disability. Concern that even tighter ethical regulation of photographs in ethnographic research may discourage such research is itself an ethical issue, as hearing the voices of children with intellectual disability is recognised as significantly underrepresented in research (Boxall & Ralph, 2009; Soto & Swadener, 2005). Visuals as text provide an accessible and meaningful way for children with intellectual disabilities who may not access the written word or verbal speech to participate in research. Sometimes, children consent to the photographs being

published in research and this decision is overturned by adults who may believe they are acting in children's best interests. Ethical research consent attends to the risk of harm and it may be considered a breach of children's rights for the decisions to be overturned (Pink, 2012; Prosser, 2011; Smith, 2015).

Research design

Location

Beach Drive School is a decile five primary school in a medium-sized city in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Deciles are a measure of the socio-economic position of a school's student community relative to other schools throughout the country. For example, decile one schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of children from low socio-economic communities, whereas decile ten schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these children. Beach Drive School is for pupils from years one (five years) to year six (approximately eleven years). At the time of this research, the school had become something of a magnet for disabled children. With a school roll of just over one hundred and seventy, six children received funding support through the ORS (Ministry of Education, 1996a). Two of the six children enrolled at the school after the research project commenced. The school had a stable staff. The school roll had grown a little as the result of a neighbouring school closure and was now stable. Most children attending Beach Drive School lived locally.

Research narratives could be considered to reflect a local, micro response to the larger macro systems and processes that impacted on how Beach Drive School approached assessment for disabled children (Schön, 1991; Stake, 2000). Hearing the participants' stories and interpreting them was never straightforward. There was little in the research data that was a self-evident fact, as "facts are always clothed in the wardrobe of social assumptions" (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1995, p. 110). I was aware of my own responsibility to the participants as the person re-storying their stories. Active listening involved making sense of multiple relationships between people, systems, policies, beliefs and values. Bringing these aspects together in an attempt to understand narrative assessment at Beach Drive School as a whole is more than a sum of the parts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

Selecting participants

As a critical researcher, I wanted to explore a range of voices and, while disabled children have not always been thought about as participants in research, there is a growing recognition of the need to listen to them (Carpenter & McConkey, 2012; Connors & Stalker, 2003; Hemmingsson & Penman, 2010; Kearney, 2009; Smith & Taylor, 2000). When beginning this research, I spoke to team members supporting the disabled children at their March 2012 IEPs and outlined the project plan. I gave all adult team members an information sheet and asked that they let me know if they were interested in participating. Most team members confirmed their willingness to be involved, and I chose to focus on the school-based teams who knew the children best. Parents of one child were in the process of setting up a new business and we agreed they would not be active participants but they requested their daughter be involved.

PhD research timeframe



This research project was undertaken in a part-time capacity alongside my teaching roles in primary and secondary schools. A university suspension from 2013 - 2015 occurred as a result of a full-time work opportunity which involved considerable travel. I made a commitment to continue my various teaching roles for the duration of this research project, as I wanted the reality of the classroom to be ever-present in my thinking.


2011			
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Enrolled in PhD programme →			
Preliminary reading informing research →			
Developing questions →			
Colloquium 12th October →			
Ethics approval 7 th November			
Teaching in a range of schools →			

2012			
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Data gathering in research schools →			
Establishing Endnote library →			
Teaching in a range of schools →			
Interviews undertaken →			
Transcription of interviews →			
Data analysis begun →			

2013

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Teaching term 1 only. PhD suspended from June 2013 – April 2015			

2015			
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Suspension lifted, PhD resumed 			
Ongoing data analysis and writing up of thesis 			

2016			
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Ongoing data analysis and writing up of thesis 			

2017			
Term 1	Term 2		
Ongoing data analysis to completion of thesis			

Figure 2: PhD Timeframe

Data collection

The complexities of classroom practice signalled the importance of using a range of research and data collection methods (Jones, 2013). I envisaged this would better capture authentic practice and multiple voices to support unpacking the research questions.

Teachers' willingness to share their thinking and experience throughout the research project greatly enriched the data collected. I had well-established relationships with current teachers and with those who had taught the focus children in previous years. As a teacher working in Beach Drive School, I had the opportunity to review historical assessment artefacts that contributed to the teaching files and assessment folders for each child (Gipps & Stobart, 1993; Timperley & Parr, 2010). These provided information that included work samples, specialist reports, teacher assessments and planning documents. This range of data enabled me to think about other people's perceptions and understandings of the children. As part of the research project, I revisited my own archived planning, observation notes, reports, children's work samples and IEPs. I had ethical approval to use current and historical teaching materials alongside data specifically gathered for this project. Parents often gave me copies of reports that had been written by specialists in both medical and educational areas, and reading these added to my understanding of the complexity of lived realities for families and also of different ways the children were defined and perceived (Macartney, 2011).

Communication was challenging for the disabled children who participated in this study. They required a range of approaches to support both receptive and expressive communication (Ryndak, Orlando, Storch, Denney, & Huffman, 2011; Soto & Swadener, 2005). My teaching role allowed me many opportunities to check that I was hearing the messages children wanted to share and that I was representing their voices as accurately as I was able. Parents' deep knowledge and understanding of their children frequently helped me make sense of observations. An example of this is a teaching day where the class teacher and I were challenged to engage one of the children in classroom learning. She kept leaving the classroom, standing in the playground and looking up towards the sky. We could not understand the reason for this behaviour. I mentioned this to the child's mother at 3 o'clock. The mother laughed and explained that the child's Nana was arriving from Auckland on a plane that day. The child was looking forward to this visit and the frequent checks of the sky were probably to look for the plane bringing Nana. The conversation with Mum helped us to make sense of her daughter's actions.

Data collected for this project included interviews, narrative assessments, children's personalised books showing narrative assessment in language accessible to them (both electronic and hard copies), photographs, texts, emails, notes, personal reflections and conversations.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken towards the end of the formal data collection period. Using the general research questions guiding this project, I shaped more specific questions as I attempted to make sense of the participants' understandings of narrative assessment within and across their varied roles. I wanted to explore a range of perspectives relating to narrative assessment within sociocultural contexts, and therefore structured the information sheets and differentiated question guides to reflect family experience, management roles and classroom perspectives. For the child participants, I created a visual information sheet (appendix two) which was able to be accessed in multiple ways including aurally on the computer through personalised books created on the literacy software Storymaker (Geddes & Geddes, 2016).

In some research interview contexts, the interviewer would not make contact with participants until formal ethical approval had been granted. In this research situation, I knew and worked with the participants in my teaching role long before the thought of a research project was born. The advantages and challenges of this unique context are discussed later in this chapter.

The interview itself can be conceptualised in many ways. Limerick, Burgess-Limerick and Grace, (1996) conceptualise it as a gift of text, of time and of understanding that the interviewee gives the interviewer. As a gift, the interviewee trusts the "researcher will not betray them, abuse their power or misuse their words" (Limerick et al., 1996, p. 458). Assuming the concept of a gift obliges the researcher to treat the data and the giver with sensitivity and respect. This is the way I chose to make sense of the interview process within this project.

Sixteen interviews were conducted with nineteen participants. Two of the teachers who worked in the same school syndicate and who had both taught two of the child participants

chose to have a joint interview. I offered parents the opportunity to talk separately or together. In each case, parents chose to be interviewed together. Interviews with all participants were conducted at times of their choosing on days outside my classroom teaching commitments. I offered to conduct interviews off-site; however all staff chose to give their time for an interview at school. We were fortunate to have access to a small, quiet space to conduct the interviews. This was very important, as I was aware that school can be a relatively public space. Although the nature of the material discussed was unlikely to be controversial, I recognised that participants needed to feel safe in expressing their views in a confidential and safe environment (Connors & Stalker, 2003; De Marrais, 2004; Kvale, 2007). I wanted participants to know that I respected their perspectives. All participants consented to the interviews being digitally recorded for later transcription, analysis and member checking. Each adult participant accepted the offer of a written question guide and I ensured these were received at least two days prior to the scheduled interview. Some adult participants said a question guide gave them a chance to gather their thoughts, helped them to focus, and made them feel much less anxious as they knew what to expect. I recognised they may perceive me as someone with a set of correct responses, and I tried to reassure them that I was learning about narrative assessment alongside them and their thinking supported all of us in our teaching roles (Hargreaves, 2007; Jones, 2013).

As an interviewer, my focus was on listening and creating a space where participants recognised that their voices were valued, where they knew I wanted to hear their thinking and not to have them say what they thought I wanted to hear (Opie, 2003). I recognised the challenge of perceived power differentials when one of the teacher's aides said to me during her interview "am I saying what you want?" Another teacher's aide said "have I answered your questions right?" This was a surprise to me as I had not considered their understanding of my specialist teaching role and researcher position. I recognised the potential challenge of the words 'specialist' and 'researcher'. It required me to work harder to support equitable relationships. As I positioned research participants, they too positioned me and made assumptions about my thinking and about my role (Harrison et al., 2001). While I assumed we were working as a team and our teaching was a collaborative act that valued and respected all voices equally, this was not the understanding shared by

all participants (Grumet, 2010). My perception of participants' positioning within the research was narrow. Because I knew all the participants well, I made assumptions about their understanding which limited seeing the multi-layered aspects of our roles and their impact on discussions (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Kvale, 2006, 2007).

When interviewing children, the most important factor in determining the success of an interview is the connection and rapport developed between the child and the researcher (Kvale, 2007; Sligo, 2001; Smith & Taylor, 2000; Soto & Swadener, 2005; Taylor et al., 2009). Developing these relationships involved trust. Trust takes time. I felt incredibly fortunate that I had the luxury of time to come to know the children prior to commencing the research. Over a number of years I had worked alongside the three disabled children and their friends. We had worked together to develop ways to support communication so the disabled children could more successfully interact with others and engage in learning.

I reflected on the power differentials created by my position as a teacher-researcher in relation to the participants who were children. I wondered whether my role would enable participant honesty or be a barrier to such (Grumet, 2010). School structures and processes reinforce hierarchies of power. These power differentials can impact on interview situations where children may feel compelled to answer questions as if they are in a typical classroom situation. I had to be mindful of this in the ways I chose to discuss topics with the children. My understanding is that we are all learners supporting each other, may not be understood by children who have known me as their teacher. My role as teacher may have held more power than my beliefs about the use of that power. This resonates with the work of Limerick (1996), who warns the asymmetrical relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is inescapable but can be minimised by establishing the interview as a collaborative learning exercise.

Removing children from the school environment to conduct interviews could potentially have disrupted established power structures, but may also have signalled a formality and intensity which was not the intent and may have been confusing for some children (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). All interviews with children were conducted within the familiar school surroundings. Parents were invited to attend the interview with their child; however, all

chose not to. I hoped all semi-structured interviews felt like conversations, so that participants felt comfortable to contribute and discuss their thoughts and ideas. I observed this to be true of interviews apart from those with the teachers' aides and some children.

In the first interview with a friend and classmate of one of the disabled children, I attempted to have a conversation based on the research questions. The interview was recorded digitally following reconfirmation of consent. Although I knew this child quite well, she appeared uncomfortable. I asked if she wanted the digital recorder turned off, but she assured me she was happy for the recording to continue. I repeated this offer later while we were talking together. I asked would she prefer if I asked questions sequentially, listened to her, and then wrote down the questions and her responses. This was quickly agreed to, and suggested much to me about children's embedded understanding of teacher and child roles within school. Our interview/conversation approximated the inquiry approach practised in class during individual writing interviews within the learning area of English. When I asked questions and wrote down her answers, the child participant appeared more relaxed and became more forthcoming in our conversation; perhaps because she was secure that we were both in the roles which she understood and where she felt most comfortable – teacher/learner. I tried to be collaborative within this construct. At the beginning of subsequent interviews with classmates, I asked if they wanted me to just chat with them and record our conversation digitally, or write down questions and responses while we talked together. All of the non-disabled children asked me to write during the digital recording. Each response was read and checked with them as it was written. This approach worked well, and the four classmates interviewed seemed to enjoy that I was asking them to check what I had written, occasionally correcting me or extending and further explaining their responses.

When interviewing the disabled children, I asked a teacher's aide known to each child to also attend. I had asked the teachers' aides to film the interviews to support my transcription through attention to visual data. However, in each case the child was sufficiently distracted by the filming process that they were unable to participate meaningfully in the interview. Instead the teacher's aide took photos with my camera throughout the interviews, a process the children were so familiar with they tended to

ignore. I also created a digital recording. While this provided evidence of my questions, all of which were presented with accompanying visuals to support understanding, each of the disabled children experienced difficulties with expressive and receptive communication. Their communication included gesture, eye gaze, symbol use, sign language and speech. The interviews produced minimal transcribable data. Immediately these interview conversations were completed, I wrote everything I could remember in relation to children's responses, gestures, hesitations and silences. I subsequently checked my record with the teacher's aide present in the interview.

The interviews did not signal the end of data collection, as I continued to collect teaching artefacts for the remainder of 2012. While I was a staff member, teachers, teachers' aides, parents and children continued to notice learning and share this role with me. This took the form of incidental conversations, points raised during teacher planning meetings, photographs, emails and narrative assessments. I gratefully recorded such and added them to the data set.

Narrative assessments

As the research project progressed, I became more aware of the powerful impact of the narrative assessments on the study participants. I decided to use this data in a more innovative way. I asked parents to each choose a narrative assessment that they felt represented important learning for their child to be included in this research. I also asked each of the disabled children to choose a favourite personalised story. They appear as appendices three through to eight and are referred to in later chapters. The selected narrative assessments are included in their entirety as Smyth and McInerney (2013, p. 4) suggest that including mere snippets or fragments of lengthy pieces of data can rob the writing of important contextual information and remove detail that provides the authentic teaching and learning context.

Narrative assessment documents had become the preferred school assessment and reporting tool for the disabled children and were a focal point for team communication and for supporting ongoing teaching and learning. They were gathered as evidence of progress in school files and were also available to external specialists supporting the children. They

formed the basis of most teaching and learning decisions and were the focal point of IEPs, as they provided authentic accessible evidence from which to determine ongoing learning objectives.

The three disabled child participants each had a browsing box of narrative assessments, created as personalised books using child accessible language and formats (examples of such as appendices six to eight). Numbers of these stories were shared daily with classmates during browsing box reading time. When children were accessing books independently, they sometimes preferred the electronic versions available on their computers in their Storymaker libraries.

Photographs

The narrative assessments belong to the children whose learning they celebrate, and therefore must be accessible to them. At the time of this research, not all participant children were able to make sense of written text. Photographs provided a rich, authentic and inclusive source of research data in the narrative assessments and were recognised as meaningful text accessible to all team members (Carr & Lee, 2012; Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010; Kellock, 2011). I had been taking and including photographs in narrative assessments prior to this research project. During the research period of 2012, teachers, teachers' aides and parents increasingly shared photos through e-mail. Photographs were usually accompanied by a brief explanatory note, which was important to create the context in which learning occurred (Bourke, 2006; Flear, 2002). A number of photographs used in writing narrative assessments were taken by children using my camera as they noticed learning among their peers.

Emails

Email conversations about school organisation and children's learning provided a useful tool for connecting and supporting collaboration and had been part of the established communication routine between home and school prior to this research. At times, I emailed teachers and families around some aspect of a child's learning and, through sharing their knowledge, they supported my teaching. During the research period, all emails that related

to narrative assessment, and child and teacher learning were kept, coded and revisited during data analysis.

Conversations

Conversations at school, both formal and informal, were a valued means of sharing information. During the research period, I attended to these conversations more closely. This may have meant I scribbled a quick note on a scrap of paper or wrote a few keywords on the back of my hand to remind me of something said by a participant. As soon as possible, I would record this information in my teaching plans. Some of the richest and most meaningful data was collected through incidental and informal conversations. I understand this as collecting data in the spaces. With teaching staff, this may have taken the form of comments shared in the classroom, quick conversations at the photocopier or when on duty in the playground. Children frequently commented to me about learning and successes they noticed amongst their peers. Parents often stopped for a quick chat at the start of the school day as they dropped their child off to school. This was most helpful in enabling links to be made between experiences before school and the school day. Conversations over time enabled multiple stories to be heard. I recognised how differing perspectives and insights enabled me to reflect on my assumptions about teaching and learning and to remain open to the complexity of ideas shared by the participants.

Journals

Researchers recognise that recording thinking in a journal not only supports recall, but helps to clarify and keep track of information over time (Guerin, 2015). I decided to keep my own journal during the project and use this to note questions, reflections and conversations with participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In day to day teaching practice, my teaching folder also served this purpose. It was the place where my planning and assessment was recorded, and I found it much easier and more meaningful to record all thinking about teaching and learning in the one place. After a few weeks, I abandoned the use of a journal. Participants given the option of recording thinking in a journal or connecting with me personally all chose the latter, making such comments as “you’re always around – I’ll just catch you” (parent); “prefer to text or email if I think of something when you’re not here” (principal); “I don’t like book work” (child participant). I recognise

that in the busyness of a school day, and in light of my very regular presence, that suggesting the possibility of a further writing task was onerous and unnecessary.

Data analysis

The grounded theory approach

A grounded theory approach, defined as “the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research”, was used to analyse the data in this project (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 2). The rationale for using grounded theory in this research is based on an understanding of Charmaz’s (2006) work, which advocates for a socially constructed perspective to understanding data. As the researcher is immersed in data, categories, concepts and properties emerge and interconnect in a process known as theoretical sensitivity (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theorising emerges from the continuous processes of coding, synthesizing, interpreting and reinterpreting data through “constant comparative analysis” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). The process is creative and intuitive (Taylor et al., 2015). It recognises the diverse contexts, multiple realities and complex relationships that inform data analysis. The researcher’s views, values, assumptions and ideologies are visible (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Charmaz (2006) suggests that any theory developed through grounded theory is suggestive, inconclusive and incomplete. The data can support understanding, but resulting theory is not considered a universal truth (Glaser, 1978).

In trying to make sense of the project data, the researcher is mindful of how power is manifested, who holds the power and the consequences of this for the participants and the researcher (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Researcher reflexivity is pivotal to the data analysis process. Interpretation is never without researcher perspective, a position of power that demands respect for participants and representations of them. The researcher attempts to understand what the participants consider to be important. A copy of the research questions kept in my teaching folder meant that when I was writing and reflecting at the end of the teaching day, I could readily refocus my thinking as I attempted to make sense of data. I wrote data memos in green pen through all my teaching materials. These memos

took the form of questions, keywords or an asterisk indicating I needed to return to the work and think about material.

Glaser and Holton (2004) suggest being sensitive to developing theories means the researcher must begin with as few predetermined ideas as possible. While prior knowledge informs development of categories, the categories are not forced to fit the literature. The researcher approaches the analysis of data with an open mind, not an empty head (Dey, 1999). For me, this required particular care to not look for what I was expecting to find. Respecting participants' views meant reading transcripts and data "with a willingness to be continually surprised" (Smyth & McNerney, 2013, p. 4). I was conscious I might inadvertently try to fit themes from data analysis to the literature review and for this reason, I chose to do an initial analysis of data before writing a literature review.

Coding the data

Throughout the research I used green pen to indicate a potentially useful artefact that became visible in my day to day teaching at Beach Drive School, which I collected and scanned into a single computer file. At this stage, no categories were given to this material. Interview transcripts were attended to differently. I recognised the need to fully immerse myself in the transcripts and set aside a large chunk of time to make sense of this data. I began by printing each interview transcript and reading it in its entirety while listening to the digital copy. The transcripts included pauses, laughter, repetitions and speech hesitations such as "um". I wanted to be able to read the transcripts while reliving the interview conversations. The first two times I listened, read and reflected. The third time I read and used open coding, a process that refers to generating initial concepts from data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This involved writing keywords in the margins that resonated with the research questions, with assessment theory and practice and with effective teacher pedagogy. This process was continued for each interview transcript. I then applied the same coding process to each piece of data previously identified by green pen.

The list of keywords and phrases from the open coding process offered opportunities to look for patterns of repeating ideas. My original list contained sixty seven concepts and key words. Some of the emergent ideas were repeated across multiple sources of data, and

some did not seem to link to the literature I had read. Some emerging concepts highlighted gaps in my reading that needed addressing. I had to think about coding decisions and the scope of the research questions. The sheer volume of interview data meant I would have felt overwhelmed by dipping in and out of it. I felt the decision to spend a longer-than-planned period of time coding data supported my ability to hear multiple voices within a consistent theoretical framework. I reduced the sixty-seven keywords and concepts to fourteen and then to eight. Each of these eight concepts was colour-coded. From this point onwards, all coding was computer-based. I worked with one key concept at a time, reading and colour coding every piece of data. For example one key concept was 'care'. I chose to recognise all data related to 'care' through the use of the colour blue. Some pieces of data resembled a rainbow as they appeared to fit more than one concept and were therefore coded with more than one colour. At the end of this process, I created eight documents, each headed by a key concept. Each document contained multiple voices, examples from praxis and thinking. Each piece of data was in a sufficiently large chunk to retain its meaning. Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to this as axial coding. Concepts were beginning to form subsets and conceptual families. Further analysis enabled these eight key concepts to be drawn into five key research outcomes. This is the process of selective coding, where categories began to form a theoretical framework (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The theoretical framework was frequently revisited as analysis continued throughout the writing process, and the five theoretical outcomes changed over time to become three. These are referred to in the discussion chapter as the three significant research findings.

While codes and categories go some way towards analysis, alongside the coding process coexists researcher reflexivity. I questioned whether developing theory matched the data. I forced myself to critically re-examine the data, searching for the emergence of new and unexpected theories. I tried to be open to material that might challenge some developing theories. The process of coding, memo writing and trying to make sense of the multiplicity of voices and perspectives created confusion and disconnections. Ongoing comparative analysis and openness to developing theory helped to create emergent understandings of

the data. I recognised this process as iterative. I accepted that research themes and outcomes could change many times during the writing process.

I returned to the Ministry of Education's Position Paper on Assessment (2011b) and Effective Pedagogy of the New Zealand Curriculum (2007), identified the key themes and ideas from each of these documents and juxtaposed them with the emerging research outcomes. The analysis of a broad range of data that realised multiple seemingly-disconnected narratives slowly evolved into a developing theoretical framework that has provided a way to begin to weave many threads into a meaningful metanarrative. The rationale for this research provided a reminder to select focal areas that supported inquiry about assessment and to acknowledge potential for ongoing research inquiry. I also began to recognise emergent theoretical ideas connecting children's belonging with assessment processes and outcomes. Ideas from some of the writing of Skidmore (2002), Kliever (2008b) and Wansart (1995) in particular seemed to support emerging ideas.

Ethics

At the end of 2011, I received consent to conduct this research from the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury. Ethical consideration involved paying attention to issues such as anonymity and confidentiality, researcher reflexivity and participant consent. There are two questions in the University of Canterbury ethics application that attend to anonymity and confidentiality. The first question relates to anonymity: "Will complete anonymity of participants be guaranteed?" The second question asks "Will records remain confidential and will access to data be restricted?"

Anonymity

Within this project, I understand anonymity as being related to a person being easily identified by use of their name (Anderson & Morrow, 2004). To offer some privacy to participants in this project, pseudonyms are used to replace all proper names. Participants mostly selected their own pseudonyms at the time of interviews. Pseudonyms chosen by the children had personal meaning. One of the disabled children chose the name of an older child who had been a reading buddy, and another chose a character from a much loved film. Use of visual supports and sign language supported the children to make these choices. All

the children showed competence in choosing their research name. For example, I gave one child a page of five names with accompanying pictures I thought he might relate to, and I read the list to him. I think he listened to the list. He got up, left the classroom and pointed to his school bag. I helped him to open his bag. He pulled out his library book and gave it to me. I told him we were soon to go to assembly and did not have time to read this as I put the book back in his bag. He pulled the book titled “Hairy Maclary and Zachary Quack” from his bag again and thrust it at me. We took the book into the classroom and I suggested we could read it after assembly. We sat down and he kept pointing at a picture of Hairy Maclary on the cover of the book. I had misinterpreted his communication. He looked very relieved when I worked out that this was the name he was choosing for this research. I asked a teacher’s aide to check this decision at different times, and she confirmed her belief that this was his choice of name. The following week I asked him “Are you Hairy Maclary in my stories?” He clapped and grinned – his usual way of saying a happy yes. While the pseudonyms chosen by some of the participants may be distracting to the reader, they are unaltered in the writing of this work as they are meaningful to the participants and chosen with care (Wood, 2014). Researcher integrity and attention to collaboration means their authenticity and creativity is respected.

The four classmates all found it amusing to choose a pseudonym. I made a visual story to explain to all the children the role of the University of Canterbury, and the idea that a participant’s name is not usually written in research (Appendix nine). The story was available for revisiting, both in hard copy and using Storymaker software on classroom computers. I am unsure if the children understood the reasons for use of pseudonyms. Generally the participants were far less concerned about being identified than I. One parent said “use my name, use my daughter’s name, use our surname, we want the story out there, I’m happy to talk to people, there’s nothing to hide”. I recognised that people’s views may change over time, particularly as the children become adults, and my responsibility as a researcher determined I follow guidelines approved by the University of Canterbury ethics committee. These include informed consent, avoidance of unnecessary deception, minimised risk to all participants, consistency with Treaty of Waitangi obligations and guaranteed confidentiality of data and individuals. There is a requirement to attend to

disparate power relationships and respond sensitively to the needs and characteristics of all participants (University of Canterbury, 2016). In this research, use of pseudonyms provided a low level of anonymity, as ethical approval was given to use photographs. The photographs would include research participants. An excerpt from my approved ethics application states:

Photographs demonstrating student learning are frequently taken and used in learning stories as this appears to be an effective method of demonstrating learning.

Photographs may appear in the thesis document. Names and locations will not be identified but it is possible a reader may recognise participants and connect them with a setting. All material will be treated with honesty and the utmost respect. It is understood that the nature of confidentiality is complex and while guaranteed anonymity is preferable, use of photographs prevents this. However use of visual data may create another layer to analyse. This may lead to a deepening of knowledge and understanding and is therefore worthy of inclusion.

It is hoped the photographs clearly reflected the teaching, learning and assessment that was happening at Beach Drive School, and that the benefits of publication outweigh the risk of identification. I observed that photographs carried meaning for children who found decoding of text challenging at the time of the research. Photographs appeared to add a layer that increased the visibility of pedagogy evident in the narrative assessments (Carr & Lee, 2012, p. 36).

My teaching and research work is guided by Macfarlane's (2013) assertion that "assessment shall do no harm". From the outset of the project, I made a commitment to all participants that I would not include any material that I perceived had the potential to cause harm to them or to the Beach Drive School community. This did not mean I only wanted to hear positive stories. I valued hearing and reflecting on critiques, challenges and frustrations. I recognised researcher responsibility to consider the impact of the ways I represented work about the participants and the Beach Drive School community. I recognised that there could be tensions in this work, and I had made an ethical commitment to care for and respect the participants and their contributions to this research.

It could be considered harmful to not share this research, as it provides a vehicle for a range of voices to be heard; voices that appear to have little visibility on the education research landscape in New Zealand. The stories told may have the potential to support future inclusive school practice and, if in any way they can support educators to think differently about children's capability, then as a researcher I recognise that I have an ethical responsibility to share these stories.

Confidentiality

The second question in the University of Canterbury Ethics Approval process is focused on confidentiality. It asks "will records remain confidential and access to data be restricted?" I understand confidentiality to mean that what I am told is held in the strictest confidence (Salkind, 2012). Within this research project, I have interpreted confidentiality to mean that my notes, transcriptions, writing around data analysis and draft writing are available only to me and my supervisors. I have understood that I cannot discuss data other than with the participants who have gifted it to me. As most of the participants worked together at Beach Drive School, they may have talked collegially about their involvement in this research. The parents all knew each other and may also have discussed this work. I recognise that, as all transcripts were returned in written form for checking, this may have led to shared discussion, particularly for the children whose transcripts I delivered to their homes. While the data was collected in 2012, I have maintained contact with most of the school staff and with all of the families. All continue to be interested in the progress of this research, and none have asked questions or made comments that could be considered a breach of ethical standards. I have checked my interpretations of data in an ongoing fashion with the relevant participants where I felt unsure of my analysis. This process continued throughout data analysis and into 2017. This recognises the ongoing process of data analysis that continues until completion of the research project (Taylor et al., 2015).

Researcher reflexivity

Broadly defined, researcher reflexivity means turning back on oneself to reflect on researcher actions and research processes that affect outcomes (Davies, 2008). While important for qualitative research generally, it is particularly salient for ethnographic

research where the researcher is closely involved in the relationships and culture of the research setting. Ongoing critical researcher reflexivity can strengthen the trustworthiness of research (Etherington, 2007; Kramp, 2004). Reflexivity obligates the researcher to honour the gifts of time, of thinking and of sharing that the participants bring to the research process and to prioritise their safety and their well-being (Harrison et al., 2001; Kvale, 2006). Reflexivity of self, recognises that we learn about ourselves as a result of the study of others (Stinnett, 2012). It involves critically evaluating the impact of the researcher, recognising bias, interpreting and reinterpreting data alongside participants to clarify meaning, looking for gaps in knowledge and for contradictions in the wealth of data collected. I recognise the complexity of exploring systems that are imposed alongside choices actively made as a teacher.

As a researcher, ethics extends beyond the formal consent process. I needed to acknowledge walking in a range of worlds. As a teacher, I belonged at Beach Drive School as a staff member. As a qualitative researcher I was a “guest in private spaces” (Stake, 2000, p. 447). Research is not a neutral act and my personal belief system impacted on the ways I chose to conduct and present research. My report of the research is my “dressing of the story” (Stake, 2000, p. 441). I consciously and unconsciously used power as a researcher to make day-to-day decisions about including some research data and excluding other (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Researcher reflexivity demands that I consciously reflect on why I might do this and how these decisions are made (Freire, 1997; Schön, 1991; Webb, 2010). I needed to make visible in my reporting some of the ways I have worked.

Without thinking and writing reflexively, I may collude in a retreat from social responsibility. This could mean that recognising and responding to tensions, challenges, layers of meaning and paradoxes are missed, and opportunities for creating change are lost. I needed to be consciously aware of my stated position that this research would do no harm. My teaching beliefs are based on teaching as an act of kindness, where all teaching decisions and actions are based on an ethic of care (Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 1995; Noddings, 2012; Wink, 2011). I have a responsibility to work respectfully with participants and to enact pedagogical change through modelling.

At times during this project, distinctions between my teacher and researcher roles were blurred and unclear to me. Was I focusing on an aspect of teaching because of the research project, or because it was the right thing to do for the classroom teacher, the child and the family? As a critical researcher, I questioned whether or not I was exploiting participants. Was there a personal agenda? Did we share an agenda for change? Was I driving the agenda? An effort to control personal bias is neither possible nor desirable and can be immobilising (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This research is not neutral or unbiased and, as such, beliefs and assumptions need to be acknowledged (Kinchloe et al., 2012; Lather, 1986; Smyth & McInerney, 2013). Passion and acknowledged bias can enhance educational practice (Fenstermacher & Soltis, 2004; Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000; Harrison et al., 2001; Wolcott, 2009). Supporting teaching and learning for disabled children was part of my job description; however my unstated teaching and research agenda was supporting authentic belonging for all children. At times I had to accept the messiness of this qualitative research.

The complexity of this research is situated within a wider political, social and cultural context. In trying to protect participants by focusing on positive aspects of narrative assessment, I risked idealising and narrowing content and patronising participants. This could have the unintentional outcome of reinscribing hierarchies and power structures and subverting the intent of the critical ethnographic process (Anderson, 1989; Anderson & Morrow, 2004; Stinnett, 2012). I was conscious of the historical ways that I had worked with the participants in my specialist teacher role, and there had been times in the past when I was responsible for determining ways forward in teaching and learning. Our familiar and historical ways of working were likely to be taken for granted. I had a responsibility to constantly monitor my interactions with other participants to check for default positioning of 'expert'. I was conscious of the ever present potential to exploit relationships established with participants within the research process (Harrison et al., 2001). The intent of this research to collaboratively explore an aspect of assessment required constant attention to reciprocity and to conversations that may disrupt notions of power (Freire, 1998; hooks, 1994b; Lather, 1986; Swann et al., 2012). I was guided by the work of Harrison, MacGibbon, and Morton (2001), who suggest that a reflexive researcher

constantly examines ways in which notions of reflexivity frame how data is treated, interactions with participants, and the trustworthiness of the research. As part of my teaching role within my job description, I was responsible for all assessments for the focus children, the writing of IEPs following meetings, and for curricula differentiation within the learning areas. This means I was the author of all narrative assessments written during the research period. While this was helpful to teachers, school management, families and children, it meant the responsibility for these processes remained within a specialist paradigm which could be considered the antithesis of growing an inclusive school community.

Consent

Informed consent included extra responsibility when all the participants were known to me prior to the research. I strove to maintain professional boundaries around my teaching and my research; however my belief that an ethic of care drives all teaching action and interaction means relationships are visibly valued (Macfarlane, 2004; Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 2012). My interactions with families were focused around understanding their children across a range of contexts to better support teaching and learning at school, and this collaborative approach to working with parents meant that over time many became friends. While I had professional relationships with the teaching team, as I was a member of staff over a number of years, friendships developed alongside teaching and research. I recognised this created an unpredictable and complex dynamic to the research; however the sociocultural nature of this ethnographic work was supported by meaningful relationships.

In this project, consent was gained from the school staff, Board of Trustees, parents and children (Appendices fourteen, sixteen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty and twenty one). While explanation and conversation about the research supports decision-making, the real implications of consent are more complex than the theory (Fahie, 2014; Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010; Munford & Sanders, 2001; Tollich & Davidson, 1999). Consent processes for this research are complex as some of the participants required support to process information and to communicate their thinking. I did not question the ability of the disabled children to understand this work. I knew these children well and I understood

their unique contexts for communicating and demonstrating knowledge. The challenge for me as a teacher and a researcher was to facilitate transparent, respectful processes for hearing authentic voices (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Lewis & Porter, 2004; Soto & Swadener, 2005). As the three focus children are introduced, an explanation is given as to how their voices were supported so they could communicate their decision about involvement in this research project.

Particular attention was given to explaining to all potential participants that I had ethical consent from the University of Canterbury to use photographs in this research and that I proposed including some of the children's narrative assessments in this work. All participants were given the option to choose whether or not they agreed to be visible and therefore identifiable in narrative assessments. All participants agreed that narrative assessments including unaltered photographs could become visible research data.

Participants may have felt an obligation to agree to be part of this research. Children may say 'yes' to a teacher regardless of the question (Smith & Taylor, 2000). This may be because of a power differential or they may say 'yes' to any question they may not fully understand. Parents may have felt obligated to participate because of my teaching role and fear that declining may have impacted negatively on their children. Teaching staff may have participated because of my role as 'specialist' or because the management team had chosen to become involved. The management team may have felt their roles obligated them to participate. I assured participants as a group and individually that there was no expectation of their participation. Following explanation and dissemination of information and consent forms, I suggested completed forms could be returned to my 'mailbox' in the staffroom, scanned and emailed, or returned in children's communication books. I reassured all potential participants I would not contact them regarding the project if forms were not returned by a given date. I understood not returning a form may be the easiest way for people to communicate their decision not to participate.

Classmates

The classroom teachers participating in this project worked with me as we identified four children who did not have a label of disability, selected because they were friends of the

disabled child participants. They were selected to share their understanding of narrative assessment and of learning. The mothers of three of the four children were already known to me through their presence and involvement at school. Families were given an information sheet about narrative assessment and the proposed project and also a copy of the information sheet and consent form designed to be used with their children (appendices ten, eleven and twelve), which I discussed with them. All four of the families who were approached consented to their children being involved in the research. They agreed to their children being given the information, having the right to choose whether or not to participate, and to their children being interviewed at a time that was convenient to them and their classroom teacher. I met with each of these four children separately, showing them a child's personalised book of a narrative assessment and explaining we would be talking about the books. The children were familiar with the personalised narratives, having shared them with the disabled children during class reading time. I explained the information sheet and consent form to the children. Through conversation, I tried to determine their understanding of the research project. I asked the children to think about whether or not they wanted to be involved, and asked them to talk to their families and to think about it over the weekend. All children agreed to participate, and signed the consent forms, copies of which I subsequently sent home to their families.

Teachers

This project was situated within three classrooms at Beach Drive School. It was important that all staff working within the school had knowledge of the project, its aims and the ways the research would be conducted. I presented the project purpose and outline at one of the regular staff meetings. An informal shared conversation was based on an information sheet (appendix thirteen). I left consent forms for the staff directly involved with the disabled children, and they returned these to my 'mailbox' over the next few days (appendix fourteen). All staff signed consent forms, and all indicated they were happy for photographs of themselves to be included.

Teachers' aides

As teachers' aides do not usually attend staff meetings, I approached the two teachers' aides who knew and supported all three disabled children at school and had well

established relationships within school and with families. They had also been previously exposed to the narrative assessment approach within their supporting roles. I followed the same explanation and consent process as that for teaching staff. Both teachers' aides consented to the research process and were happy for photographs of themselves to be included in the writing.

Board of Trustees

I attended a Board of Trustees meeting to present the research project and formally request permission to conduct research within Beach Drive School. I used the information sheet (appendix fifteen) to briefly explain the theory and process of narrative assessment, the significance of including photographs and the implication that those involved could be identified. The Board of Trustees was familiar with the narrative process, as the principal had previously presented schoolwide milestone reports to them using a narrative format. The board chair was also a senior university staff member who had extensive supervisory experience with doctoral students. He expressed the view that he understood the implications of using photographs in published research. The Board of Trustees considered that a commitment to assessing children's learning was something they wanted to support, and consented to the research project and the inclusion of photographs (appendix sixteen). The principal offered me a copy of the consent form all families sign on enrolling, which gives permission for photographs of their children to be used for advertising and publicity about Beach Drive School (appendix seventeen). The principal gave her consent and offered her support to the staff who had consented to join the research (appendix eighteen). The Board considered the intent of this project as publicly sharing the school's use of narrative assessment and recognised their school consent form was an additional layer of support offered to endorse the use of photographs.

Parents

At the time formal consent from the parents of the disabled children was required, I contacted each family to ascertain their continued willingness to be involved and for permission to talk to their children. I assured families that a decision not to be involved in the research would not impact on teaching and learning for their children at school. All

parents agreed to participate, agreed that I ask their children if they would like to be involved and agreed that photographs which would identify their children could be used.

Sharing the Findings

A commitment was made to share research findings with participants. Some participants have asked for a copy of the completed document, which will be made available in electronic form. On completion, a brief summary of the findings will be emailed to each of the adult participants. I will offer to meet with families and teaching staff if they wish to discuss the research findings. A child friendly version of the findings will be created using the visual supports in Storymaker software, and given to each of the disabled children on a flash drive, to be added to their digital libraries (Geddes & Geddes, 2016). A digital version means children can listen, view and independently access a summary of the research findings. A hard copy of this will also be distributed to each of the child participants.

Data Storage

Hard copies of data including interview transcripts, teaching plans, narrative assessments, memos, photographs and correspondence are organised and filed securely in my home. Digital copies of interviews are stored on my computer, on the original recording device and backed up on two external hard drives. All data was scanned and stored on my computer. All writing was continuously backed up to an external hard drive. Both the computer and the hard drive require a password to gain access.

Member Checks

Member checking involves participants receiving a copy of work they contributed to, providing them with an opportunity to check for accuracy and to suggest any changes to the researcher. This process usually happens before data analysis begins.

In this research, all interviews were fully transcribed and scripts returned to participants for member checking. Participants were asked to check transcripts for accuracy, that their intended messages were clear, to make any additional comments, and to cross out material they did not want included. One teacher and one parent added notes. I gave copies of the children's interview transcripts to their parents. I asked that they confirm they were happy for this data to be used and for them to check the content with their child. I asked that

parents respond with any changes. I checked with the classmates who had been interviewed to check the transcription was an accurate record of what they meant. For the disabled child participants, I made personalised electronic books in accessible formats for them. They could look at and listen to these electronic books through Storymaker software. The books summarised the information about narrative assessment that the children gave me in their interviews. I recognised some children needed to access material multiple times to support information processing. Visual supports were used to check children agreed to the interview material being used (appendices nineteen and twenty). I cannot be certain of the children's level of understanding, but I accepted their parents' approval for the transcribed material to be used (appendix twenty one).

Right to Withdraw

All participants were informed of and subsequently reminded of their right to withdraw from the research project at any time. The nineteen participants in Beach Drive School community who consented to participating at the outset of the project remained involved for the duration of the research. No additional participants joined the research. Participants were informed that data was safely stored for this and any subsequent work for a period of five years. After five years all interview transcripts will be shredded and electronic files deleted.

Risks

A significant and identified risk of this work is the identification of research participants. I have worked within University ethical guidelines with a commitment to recognising possible harmful consequences. Careful consideration has been given to the material written within this thesis with the aim of honest representation without causing harm.

Knowing the children and research participants

In this section, the three disabled children who participated in the project are introduced. Respecting their gifts of knowledge requires they be known as capable children first and as research participants second. This thinking is grounded in the understanding that teaching and learning is based on authentic relationships. This requires genuine respect and care (Monchinski, 2010; Smyth & McInerney, 2013). An important part of this research involved

listening to children's voices; particularly the voices of children who found communication challenging. Enabling the voices of Princess Mia, Hairy Maclary and Jessie to be heard depended on relationships and understandings that had developed over time (Garth & Aroni, 2003; Lundy, 2007; O'Neill, 2014). Within DSE and the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007), children are recognised as capable social agents whose voices are important (Morton, 2012; O'Neill, 2014).

Roles and relationships between the participants at Beach Drive School are illustrated in figure three below. Not all members of the children's teams were formally involved in this research. The two teachers' aides supported a number of children, although the diagram represents the class situation where most of their time was spent. The staff all knew each other and had worked together in syndicate planning, buddy classroom activities and professional learning.

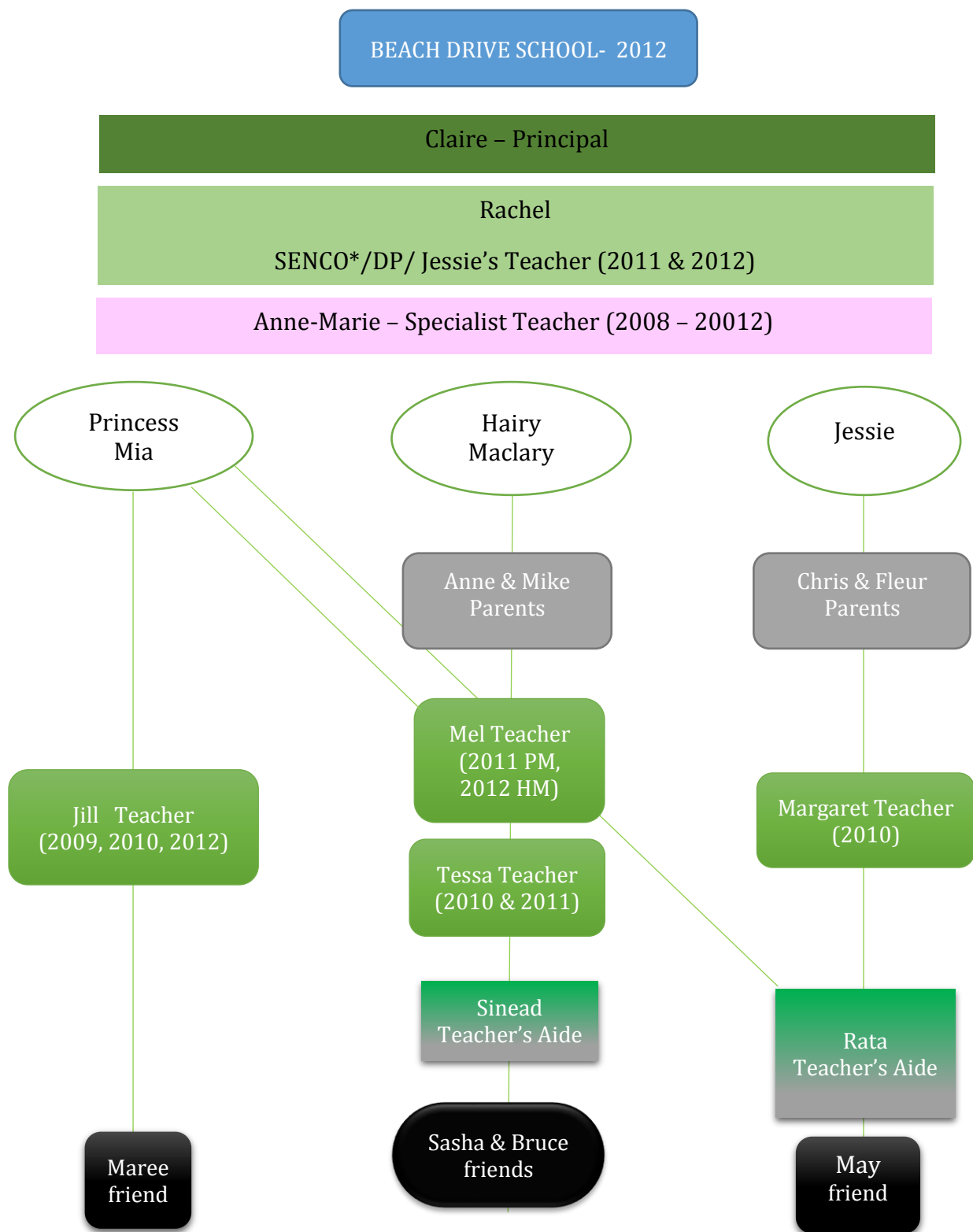


Figure3: Research participants, roles and relationships

*SENCO = Special Education Needs Coordinator

Princess Mia and our work together

Princess Mia was eleven years old and in year six at the time this research was undertaken. I taught Princess Mia from 2009 till the end of the 2012 alongside two different classroom teachers. She had been part of Beach Drive School community since she began school at six years of age. She is described as having a learning disability. Princess Mia had additional adult support in class for much of each day from a teacher's aide. Princess Mia loved imaginative play with television character toys, had an amazing memory and a quirky sense of humour. If someone quoted a line from anywhere in the script of a popular children's movie such as 'Toy Story', Princess Mia was able to continue the script using all the character voices. She appeared to be able to recite the entire movie script. Princess Mia had significant challenges around communication in terms of processing language. She sometimes used visual supports to enable her to predict, self-manage and relate to the people and world around her. In times of challenge, visual supports became particularly important. As her literacy skills developed, communication support needs were often met through simple written statements, feedback and reminders recorded on a small white board which Princess Mia carried with her as she needed.



Princess Mia enjoyed praise from teachers when she shared with them a completed piece of school work. Over time she developed a personal sense of achievement when she completed tasks and would often say aloud to herself "well done Princess Mia", then raise her right hand. This was a signal to peers that she felt a 'high five' was deserved. Peers enjoyed and shared in Princess Mia's learning. Princess Mia was happy to be on her own but, as a well-liked class member, she had lots of friends who sought her company.



Princess Mia's voice

At times Princess Mia's speech was echolalic, which for her meant that she repeated the last sentence or phrase she heard someone say. This action often served to block receptive communication and enabled her to distance herself from additional processing demands. When she was anxious, it was difficult for her to process oral communication; however supporting communication with pictures, symbols or brief written notes made processing

information easier. Sometimes interacting with a person challenged Princess Mia's processing ability. At such times it was useful to use a puppet, as it was easier for Princess Mia to attend to the puppet than to a person. Hearing Princess Mia's voice depended on her wanting to communicate, which for her meant trusting another person and knowing supports such as visuals or a whiteboard were available if needed. Enabling and understanding Princess Mia's expressive and receptive communication was necessary for her to consent to participation in this research and to sharing her perspective about learning and belonging at school. A book using child-friendly language (appendix twenty two) was available in both electronic and hard copies and was revisited multiple times before the research commenced. The narrative below shows the photographs Princess Mia selected to demonstrate to others how she accessed learning and the process through which she chose a favourite narrative assessment for this research.

Hearing Princess Mia's Voice

	<p>A computer programme (Word Q) was used to support literacy development but also to enable Princess Mia to express an idea when speaking was difficult. At times she has typed critical messages and taken the computer to an adult who can listen to and read the message. Princess Mia relied on people who knew her well to support her communication with others.</p>
<p>How Princess Mia chose her favourite narrative assessment for this research.</p>	
	<p>All of Princess Mia's narrative assessments were turned into photostory books for her, showing her learning. Teachers recognised these books had helped Princess Mia to attach meaning to print and had significantly improved her literacy skills. While other children in the class read library books, Princess Mia chose to read her personalised</p>

	<p>narrative assessments. Teaching staff and friends took note of the books Princess Mia appeared to choose on multiple occasions.</p>
	<p>Each year, Princess Mia's narrative assessments were collated and became her formal school report. Princess Mia was given a copy of this adult version. As her decoding skills improved, she increasingly chose to read this independently and was often heard saying "well done Princess Mia" as she turned a page. Teachers recognised her preferred stories in this collation as those she read first. Stories included using her computer, visiting the airport, and dancing.</p>
	<p>Princess Mia was asked to select her favourite narrative assessment from her browsing box collection. She chose a story about her school trip to the airport. Over subsequent weeks, Princess Mia's friend Maree gave her a number of opportunities to choose other personalised narrative assessments and Princess Mia consistently returned to that featuring her airport trip.</p> <p>(This book is included as Appendix seven).</p>

Hairy Maclary and our work together





At the time of this research, Hairy Maclary was in year six and he was eleven years old. He had been a member of Beach Drive School since he began school at the age of six years. He was described as having high and complex needs and had support from a teacher's aide at

all times during the school day. At the time of this research, Hairy Maclary communicated by using a combination of visuals, sign language, gesture and facial expression. He did not communicate through the spoken word. He also used a Go Talk, an Augmentative and Alternative Communication device (AAC), which enabled him to touch pictures on a screen which when selected translated into programmed phrases or words. Hairy Maclary usually had good receptive language and sometimes became upset when others did not understand his expressive communication. He had his own computer and was very adept at exploring systems and programmes. At home, he loved kicking a ball up and down the hall with his little brother and snuggling up in bed at night while his Dad or Mum read his favourite books to him. I supported Hairy Maclary in 2011 and in 2012 as his specialist teacher. I had worked with him in the school swimming programme in 2009 and in 2010.

Hairy Maclary's voice

This narrative shows some of the ways Hairy Maclary's voice was supported at school, the photographs he chose to reflect his communicative abilities, and how he chose a narrative assessment to share for this research project. Co-constructing multiple communication pathways with Hairy Maclary enabled him to initiate, respond to and participate in decision making about his learning. Hairy Maclary initiated meaningful communication with those who he knew understood the multimodal approaches that he required. He chose to respond to people through use of visuals, sounds, sign language and silence. Understanding and consent around this project was supported through regular reading of the book shown in appendix twenty two. Adults who knew him well, understood that when he pointed to the 'yes' button in the research consent book, he was indicating his understanding of the research purpose.

Hearing Hairy Maclary's voice

	<p>Hairy Maclary had strip flipcharts of personalised visuals that supported his communication.</p> <p>Having located the desired message, Hairy Maclary looked at the teacher so she could see what he wanted to say. He was pointing to the visual “computer time now please”.</p>
	<p>Hairy Maclary used a range of communication strategies. He signed ‘no’, to indicate he did not want to continue bike riding.</p>
	<p>Hairy Maclary learned to use a touchscreen Go Talk. This is a high-tech AAC device with many layers/pages and is programmed to enable Hairy Maclary to point to symbols which became verbal messages. The device worked best when Hairy Maclary felt he had time to communicate his message.</p>
<p>How Hairy Maclary chose his favourite narrative assessment for this research.</p>	
	<p>Each narrative assessment was turned into a photo story and was kept in his browsing boxes. When visual supports were used to support Hairy Maclary to choose his ‘best book’, he selected three books. The books were about swimming, cooking pasta for lunch, and his computer.</p>



All the hardcopy photo books of narrative assessments had been converted to electronic versions using the software Storymaker. One of Hairy Maclary's preferred activities was to access his online story library. He scanned all the titles of the books and listened as the titles were read to him. He then clicked on the book he wanted to read and engaged in a number of literacy based activities within that book. As he seemed to spend the longest time in his swimming books, Sinead and I understood that to mean these were his favourite stories and as such a copy of a swimming story is included as appendix six.





Jessie's voice




Jessie had some favourite conversation topics, particularly around her cats and other people's cats. This was predictable and therefore safe language for her to use. Jessie required time to process language and was sometimes overwhelmed by the busyness of a junior classroom. Her classmates supported her communication naturally, using gesture and sign language. Jessie said "no" to most questions; however, the intent of this response was to enable language processing time before a meaningful response might be given. Use of visuals helped her understand order and processes. When Jessie was unable to generate language, a choice between three visuals often supported her to respond. All visual supports had a picture and word to support Jessie's literacy goal of connecting the concept of a word to a picture. Jessie communicated most effectively with one communication partner in a calm, quiet environment and when she had something to hold. She was able to share thoughts about school and her learning.

This narrative shows how Jessie's voice is supported and heard at school and how she chose a personalised narrative assessment book to share for this research project. The book explaining the research purpose (appendix twenty two) was shared frequently in the

classroom and at home prior to the research. Those sharing the book with her recognised she had an understanding of the process when she chose to store this book in the browsing box with her narrative assessment photo books.

Hearing Jessie's Voice

	<p>Jessie was able to make sense of her day when it was presented visually. She was able to read the pictures and symbols and used these to make choices. She would sometimes remove a symbol for a less preferred activity and replace it with a more preferred option. Jessie is yet to make sense of words.</p>
	<p>Jessie did not touch the iPad, but guided her buddy reader's hand to make her choice. Peers supported Jessie to make choices in her learning. Jessie chose a range of narrative assessment personalised books to read on the iPad.</p>
	<p>May used gesture to help Jessie make yes/no responses to questions in conversations.</p>
<p>How Jessie chose her favourite learning story for this research.</p>	
	<p>Jessie used Boardmaker symbols to indicate the learning areas she most enjoyed at school.</p>

	<p>Based on Jessie's choices of preferred learning areas, nine related personalised storybooks were collected. We looked at these books together.</p>
	<p>Jessie selected a book about reading. We read this together.</p> <p>This book is presented as appendix 8</p>
	<p>Jessie was supported by her teacher to read her chosen personalised photo book to the class. The accessibility of the photographs in the book supported Jessie to read.</p>

How Jessie, Princess Mia and Hairy Maclary consented to this research

I recognised the difficulty gaining informed consent for this research from Hairy Maclary, Princess Mia and Jessie. I responded to this challenge in multiple ways. As the three participants were all children, I first asked their families for permission to approach their children about the research. I created an adapted consent form which was presented both as a hard copy and electronically using Storymaker (appendices nineteen and twenty). I made printed and electronic versions of a book explaining the research project, using accessible language (appendix twenty two). The book was intended to support children's understanding of the concept of research o enable the consent form to be completed. The book included questions with a possible 'yes' or 'no' response. The yes/no choices were

presented inconsistently. In this way we attempted to ascertain whether children were more likely to be responding meaningfully or always choosing the first option. The children could point to the response of their choice and/or speak. The electronic version was read aloud to the child as they touched the text on the computer screen or hovered the computer mouse over the text.

With each of the children, I began by reading a printed copy of the consent book. Princess Mia made clear responses pointing to the yes/no visual and reading the word. Jessie responded verbally and appeared to be looking at the text as I read the book to her. Hairy Maclary appeared to listen to the book but I did not notice any response to questions within the book. At another time he was presented the book electronically and he accessed it independently.

Over the course of a week, the explanatory book was shared a number of times with the children by a range of teachers' aides. Children's responses were noted. Copies of the book were sent home and parents were invited to comment on their children's responses to the consent questions. When the support team considered the children were making consistent and meaningful responses, I showed the children the consent form. Jessie responded verbally to the questions. Hairy Maclary and Princess Mia pointed to the yes/no responses. In each case, a teacher's aide was also present to note the children's responses and to check interpretations were as accurate as possible. Jessie and Princess Mia wrote their names on the form and Hairy Maclary was supported to use his name stamp to give consent. During the course of the data collection, the three children were shown the page of the book which explained they could change their minds and withdraw from the research at any time. The children did not always respond but did not appear to change their minds. I am not sure the children understood the ramifications of their consent and I hope the writing respects them as capable learners, effective communicators and beautiful children.

[Introduction to findings and conclusion chapters](#)

This section introduces the three findings chapters and a concluding discussion chapter. Each of the findings chapters focuses on making sense of data around an emergent theme.

The concluding chapter presents and discusses three key messages developed from the findings and explores the implications of these for pedagogy, practice and belonging.

Theoretical- and practice-based approaches from three pieces of literature are used to structure and guide data interpretation across the three findings chapters. These are Teaching as a way of knowing (Wansart, 1995); A theoretical model of pedagogical discourse (Skidmore, 2002); and the Ministry of Education Position Paper: Assessment (2011b). Important ideas from these pieces of research follow. Skidmore's model provides a tool for critiquing and improving pedagogy; Wansart supports a focus on relationships, knowing, meaningful observation and assessment; and the Ministry of Education Position Paper on Assessment (2011b) attends to key assessment principles that make a difference for every child in every school.

Teaching as a way of knowing

Wansart, (1995) suggests that teachers who research and reflect on their teaching to support their ongoing practice find the stories that children reveal about themselves and their learning to have transformative pedagogical and attitudinal potential. As narrative assessments of children's learning are constructed, shared and unpacked, reflexive teachers recognise underlying assumptions about teaching and learning. They may see themselves as learners alongside the children they teach, as they work together across contexts and with a range of people. Co-constructing learning demands all children's voices are heard. As teachers support multiple ways children's voices are present in learning, they come to recognise children's rich literacy experiences, where previously they may have seen failure to achieve. An increasing focus on standardised assessment practices potentially marginalises disabled children, whose learning is unrecognised within many formalised testing processes and therefore invisible within the classroom and absent within schools' data collection. Teachers who have high expectations of all children as learners, question policies and approaches that challenge deficit and norms referenced approaches to teaching and learning.

Discourse of inclusion

Skidmore's model (2002) (appendix twenty three) outlines a 'discourse of inclusion' premised on the belief that all children and families belong, are welcome and are valued as equal members of the school community. An environment and practices based on a discourse of inclusion include all children learning together within one curriculum and diversity being recognised as a strength. Teaching is based on knowing each learner, meaningful relationships and building on children's capabilities. The focus is on sociocultural ways of working where all members of the classroom community, adults and children, contribute to shared learning and where teachers adapt the environment and differentiate learning content to support success and belonging for all. Belonging is challenged by increasingly narrowed assessment approaches that potentially exclude some children from learning alongside their peers. The discourse of inclusion is the antithesis of the discourse of deviance, which focuses on deficit discourses where some children are recognised as lacking ability and potential, requiring of remediation, an alternative school curriculum and specialised teaching approaches that are different from their peers.

Position Paper on Assessment

The Position Paper on Assessment (2011) was designed as a high-level paper to inform and direct policy, and it outlines the New Zealand Government's vision for assessment in compulsory primary and secondary education. It describes what an assessment landscape should look like if the focus was on improving "educational development of students and the quality of education programmes" (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 9). The paper describes assessment as a mechanism to check that learning is occurring or has taken place so that ongoing learning can be planned for through a process of inquiry, decision-making, reporting and informing. A deep understanding of curriculum informs assessment processes that focus on children and place them at the centre of all teaching and learning decisions. Teachers recognise that quality relationships with children underpin quality assessment, as they draw evidence of learning from multiple sources to strengthen their assessment practices. Teachers know that teaching, learning and assessment processes are deeply intertwined.

Table One provides a structure of the findings chapters. It includes a summary of the relevant emergent theme, key literature and ideas used to present and interpret the data for each findings chapter in response to the research questions below.

1. How can narrative assessment influence our understandings of assessment theory and the consequences of assessment?
2. How can narrative assessment support inclusive practice?
3. How does the narrative assessment process impact on teaching and learning?
4. How do families make sense of narrative assessments about their child?
5. How do children make sense of narrative assessments?

Widening Horizons Framework

The content of each findings chapter moves from a micro to a macro focus. Chapter Four begins with the micro lens where the focus is on every child as capable and as a learner. Attention is given to pedagogical knowledge supporting quality teaching and learning.

The focus in Chapter 5 is wider; focusing on the relationships that support teaching pedagogy. In particular attention is given to the relationships between children and their teachers; amongst children; the relationships between teachers and families; and the relationships educators have with each other.

Chapter Six focuses more broadly to present ideas about curriculum, and about assessment pedagogy that supports teaching and learning for all in relation to the vision of the New Zealand Curriculum at school (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Table 1: Structure of findings chapters

	<u>Chapter 4</u>	<u>Chapter 5</u>	<u>Chapter 6</u>
Key Emergent Theme & Chapter Title	Presumption of capability	Relationships that support belonging	Assessment that supports quality teaching and learning
Focus literature that frames data analysis	Key ideas from the selected literature framing each findings chapter's content		
Wansart, W. (1995). Teaching as a way of knowing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The myth of inability- (p.175) • Hearing and learning from children's voices • Responding to diversity within standardised testing contexts 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Teaching is learning" (p.169) • Children bring multiple forms of literacy to the classroom (p.169)
Ministry of Education Position Paper on Assessment (2011b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging assessment as an exclusionary device • Low expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child is at the centre • Effective assessment is reliant on quality relationships and interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum for all • An assessment capable system is an accountable system • Building assessment capability is crucial to achieving improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ professional development ○ building teacher confidence • A range of evidence drawn from multiple

			sources potentially enables a more accurate response
Skidmore's Pedagogical Discourse (discourse of inclusion) (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has an open ended potential for learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise in teaching centres in engineering the active participation of all students in the learning process (relationships between teachers and children; between teachers and parents; between children) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "A common curriculum should be provided for all students" (p.120) • The source of difficulties in learning lies in insufficiently responsive presentation of the curriculum • Support for learning should seek to reform curriculum and develop pedagogy across the school

Outlines above of the findings chapters indicate how emerging ideas from the data are structured.

Presumption of capability

Chapter Four presents and uses the data and key ideas from the literature to develop an understanding of all children as capable and as having an open ended potential for learning (Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995). Narrative assessment is evaluated as an approach that challenges the "myth of inability" (Wansart, 1995, p. 175). Actively listening to children's voices is used to gain perspectives on teaching and learning. The processes and outcomes of standardised assessment are considered in relation to children's capability. The chapter concludes with questions designed to help educators reflect on their pedagogy.

Relationships that support belonging

Chapter Five focuses on the connection between narrative assessment and relationships and interactions that support children's belonging at school. It explores the role of teachers and their use of effective assessment processes that support quality teaching and learning outcomes for the focus children and their peers (Ministry of Education, 2011b). The relationships that are examined within the data include Hairy Maclary's, Jessie's and

Princess Mia's relationships with their teachers and peers and the relationships between teachers and families (Ministry of Education, 2011b; Skidmore, 2002). How teachers and other adults position children in their relationships and decisions about teaching and learning is also a focus of the analysis and discussion in this chapter (Skidmore, 2002). The chapter concludes with questions stemming from the data and findings, intended to help educators critically reflect on their relationships and assessment practices.

Assessment that supports quality teaching and learning

In Chapter Six, data is presented to explore the relationships between narrative assessment, teaching and learning and the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995). The role of professional development in supporting teacher learning is discussed. Classroom pedagogy is explored within a sociocultural context. Adaptation and differentiation are described within the learning areas of the Curriculum (Kliwer, 2008b; Ministry of Education, 2007; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995). The chapter concludes with questions that support educators to reflect on the Curriculum (ibid).

The myth of inability

Chapter Seven synthesises and develops the research findings into three key messages. At a micro level, the discussion centres on how all participants made sense of narrative assessment and authentic belonging at school. At a macro level, the focus is the relationships between narrative assessment and teaching and learning within classroom and school communities. Tensions between assessment theories and teaching practice are discussed. Implications for teaching and research are described.

The narrative assessments selected by the families of Jessie, Princess Mia and Hairy Maclary are presented in appendices three, four and five. The personalised books selected by the focus children in this research are presented in appendices six, seven and eight. They tell the stories of learning successes in the learning areas of literacy and physical education. Reading these complete assessments before continuing may help make sense of the material discussed in the findings chapters. However, excerpts from Jessie's, Princess Mia's and Hairy Maclary's narrative assessments are embedded throughout the findings

chapters, as they formed the basis of the research interviews and were the essence of the project. The children's narratives directed the focus of the reflexive inquiry into effective teaching pedagogy throughout the project.

Summary

In this chapter I have positioned my teacher-researcher role and described the theoretical and methodological frameworks used to explore the research questions. I have described the research site. The processes for data collection and analysis are identified and discussed. Ethical challenges and responses to these are clearly specified. The limitations of the research project are noted and risks identified. The research participants are made known and their roles and connections explained. Communication supports that enabled the voices of the disabled children to be heard are described. The three findings chapters and the discussion chapter are introduced.

Chapter 4: Presumption of Capability

Introduction

This findings chapter presents a discussion about the responses of school staff, families and the children themselves to the idea of capability. Data is presented and analysed as the idea that all children are capable is investigated. Excerpts from a range of narrative assessments are included and provide important research data that supports interpretation and offers responses to the research questions. Narrative assessments belong to either Jessie, Princess Mia or Hairy Maclary, and celebrate achievement across the Learning Areas in the Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). Reflective questions are posed at the conclusion of the chapter to encourage educators to recognise and question their views and assumptions about children's ability. Narrative assessments offer the opportunity to think about constructions of capability and how this might disrupt historical ways of working. Recognising capability in every child (and adult) challenges what Wansart (1995, p. 175) described as "the myth of inability". This means high expectations are held for every child. The data presented in this chapter is intended to challenge "the myth of inability". Key concepts identified as headings are as follows:

- Assessment outcomes
- Teacher expectations
- An open-ended potential for learning
- Narrative assessments reveal capability
- Revealing capability supports teaching and learning
- Hearing and learning from children's voices
- Responding to diversity within standardised testing contexts

Assessment outcomes

Some assessment approaches are used formatively to support ongoing teaching and learning based on strength and success (Wiliam, 2011a). Some assessments are used summatively, reporting outcomes of narrow, standardised tests which can fail to acknowledge children's capabilities and the complex diversity of teaching and learning. In this section, the research data and literature is used to challenge the increasing domination of standardized assessment in New Zealand primary schools.

For some disabled children, many assessment tasks may present high levels of challenge and few perceived benefits. This can lead to educators excluding some children from assessment processes. An absence of assessment data challenges the value and belonging of all children (Slee, 2011). Teachers may also doubt their ability to teach some disabled children believing this is a role for a specialist. This way of thinking perpetuates the understanding that some children need a different curriculum and perhaps a different place to learn (Black-Hawkins, 2012; Florian, 2009). When teachers feel confident in assessment approaches that support disabled children and show their learning success, creating a classroom culture where everyone belongs is achievable.

While New Zealand teachers have been increasingly exposed to the idea and purpose of reflexivity since the introduction of the Curriculum in 2007 (Ministry of Education), the power of current educational policies can create harmful competition within and between schools and dominate how educators think about children and approach teaching and learning (Slee, 2014). Recognising and believing in the capability and value of *all* children are ideas that have been marginalised in New Zealand schools, particularly by the impact of neoliberal government policies, systems and practices over the past thirty years (Apple, 1999; Ballard, 2003a; Nairn et al., 2012). If an idea such as capability in all children is to be accepted and sustained, it needs to be widely shared and understood. Ideas and actions are underpinned by values and beliefs; therefore to disrupt and change taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions requires a serious critique of the ideology underpinning current practice (Ballard, 2013c).

Teacher Expectations

Teachers having high expectations of every child's learning is a guiding principle of the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 9). For disabled children the opposite is often true, and low teacher expectations can limit opportunities for participation and achievement (Guerin, 2015; Guerin, McIlroy, & Moore, 2013; McIlroy, 2006). Low expectations align with a deficit view of disability and an inability to see the capability and potential in all children (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Biklen & Kliwer, 2006; Skidmore, 2002). When teachers are required to use assessment approaches that may be

inappropriate and which repeatedly assess some children as failing, teachers are likely to have lower learning expectations for these children (Broadfoot, 2007; Kasa-Hendrickson, 2005; Morton, 2012). Teachers may question their ability to teach all children. Low expectations can protect educators from fear of failure when some children fail to reach the standard designated for a particular class level. Research also suggests that some parents of disabled children are afraid to have high expectations of their children's learning, particularly when test results affirmed their children's failure to achieve according to traditional standards (Mara, 2014; McIlroy, 2006). Believing all children are capable and of equal value leads to high expectations for all children's learning (Alton-Lee, 2003; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995).

A belief in children's indeterminate capability rejects the notion of fixed intelligence. Recognising and nurturing each child's capability is based on connections and relationships affirmed through participation in interdependent learning activities (Ballard, 2013a; Daniels, 2012; Lister, 2007; Skidmore, 2002). Differentiation of reading material to support literacy learning and success was evident in the personalised photo books made for Jessie, Hairy Maclary and Princess Mia. Boxes of these books were accessible to all children in the classroom. The books were a reminder and message for everyone that all children are literate, and that teaching and learning is an interconnected and iterative process (William, 2011a). It was important for adults to model their expectations of all children as learners. This included paying attention to the many small actions in day to day teaching that support a culture of openness and recognition of potential in all children.

Jessie's teacher's aide, Rata, recognised that as well as providing valuable information and insights about Jessie's learning and participation, the presence of narrative assessments and personalised learning stories within the classroom and home environments helped to guide adults and classmates to know and respect Jessie as a visibly capable member of the classroom community. Rata recounts:

Having Jessie's learning stories around helps everyone ... It shows that we set the same expectations as all the other children, and we move forward together from just where





she is rather than starting lower or not even attempting to teach. So we teach because we already see that she can achieve.

Rata's comments can help us to make sense of how potential may be recognised and supported within a culture where the value of belonging is authentic and enacted. The phrase '*move forward together*' suggests that Rata understood the importance of collaboration and co-construction for the teaching, learning and success of all children. Interdependence is valued above independence, and this has implications for assessment practice that includes a range of voices and multiple sources of evidence of learning. "*Having Jessie's learning stories around helps everyone*" suggests one of the benefits of narrative assessment is that it guides and deepens educators' understandings of the child and of their learning and participation. Rata's comment that "*We teach because we already see that she can achieve*" suggests that having narratives of learning and participation visible and accessible, provides rich material for collaborative curricular planning to support ongoing learning and participation. "*We set the same expectations as all the other children*" means high expectations are actively valued for all children, every one of whom is capable. As we think about Rata's comments, we may also begin to understand how learner identity may be constructed through our interactions with each other in the settings where we live and work.

The excerpt below shows part of Jessie's narrative assessment in English, where authentic engagement and expectations of participation and achievement in the class literacy programme are visible. We see Jessie within a sociocultural context, alongside her peers and working with the teacher. We see use of standard classroom resources such as instructional readers and material differentiated in the form of personalised books to support specific learning goals over time. Parents recognised and valued this. Jessie's mother Fleur said:

We had Jessie tested at (hospital name) before we came to this school and the report we got was horrible. We were told not to expect her to read and write but when I look at this learning story she is doing lots of reading. And she is starting to learn the words.

Jessie – Narrative Assessment - English

 <p>Jessie is reading her story to H. She is matching 1:1 carefully and listens when H. reads with her.</p>	 <p>Jessie is looking at pictures to help her make sense of the story.</p>
 <p>Jessie is reading a personalised photo book with Mrs Rachel. She is practising pointing and 1:1 matching</p>	 <p>Jessie and K. are sharing one of Jessie's personalised books in reading time. They read together and talk about the pictures</p>

Educators in Jessie's team had high expectations of her learning. This demanded quality curricular teaching and learning opportunities where Jessie was supported to learn and succeed alongside her peers. Jessie's Mum, Fleur, said, "*she is doing lots of reading*". Fleur said looking at this narrative assessment gave her hope and made her feel "*so proud, just so proud of her (Jessie)*".

Fleur said a constant concern for her was whether Jessie would have any friends and whether children would want to be with her. Fleur said:

As parents we always hope things are okay at school and we want Jessie to do well and be happy and seeing the photos of her working quietly at her desk next to someone, sitting looking at a book in the playground that sort of thing. It's not at all that I don't trust what people say, but when I see the kids' faces in the photos, I just know it's all okay.

The narrative assessments provided evidence of Jessie's belonging at school, reassured her family, and reinforced a culture of trust that supports open communication (Carr & Lee, 2012). Fleur believed that the personalised narrative assessments available as photo stories to Jessie and to her peers in the classroom supported her relationships, belonging and learning. Fleur reflected that:

I think the little learning stories Jessie has in class have really helped the other kids relate to her. She's never had a friend before. And I know Rachel (teacher) reads the (learning) stories to the class. I've seen it. Yeah. Jessie must feel so proud, yeah. I was so proud. The learning stories sort of help everyone understand and just know her better...

Reflecting on narrative assessments about Jessie's reading reinforced and guided critical reflection and teaching that supported her belonging and progress (Burgon, Hipkins, & Hogden, 2012; Carr & Lee, 2012; Lepper, Williamson, & Cullen, 2003). Margaret, who taught Jessie in 2010, reflected on a narrative assessment written in 2012. Recognising Jessie as a learner made visible the teaching praxis that supported a classroom culture where everyone's learning was valued. Margaret said:

I was reading one of the learning stories about Jessie's reading. I can just see how far she has come since I had her when she arrived. ...We always say as teachers we never know what a child will achieve or how far they will go but it is lovely to see in the learning story that she is achieving, and she is going far ... (the) stories show that Jessie is a learner just like everyone else in the class. She can see it, her Mum and Dad can see it, we all share it, we are all part of it.

Claire, the principal, commented on how a narrative approach to assessment provided teachers with a framework for noticing and planning for children's progress in their learning. She had also observed the benefits for parents of seeing their child's learning and participation at school documented, celebrated and understood by the school community. Claire commented that:

I think learning stories are an amazing record of progress, and small progress, small steps that possibly you wouldn't see ... I know it's not easy ... Just look at these photos of Jessie, (viewing a narrative assessment) and the interactions between these people. When she (Jessie) first arrived, it was so different, and now, look at what she's doing, and I think that having the learning stories captures all those special moments for all of us, but especially for Jessie and her parents. I think it gives teachers clear outlines of what the kids can do and their next learning steps. When we see that, we just want to teach her more and more. And it gives teachers a way of showing the learning that's happening, and their teaching too ... all the different things they try ... And I love the way it is built with the key competencies, because I think those are the things that our children need to have to work in this world. I just think it's a brilliant – a brilliant vehicle to show children's progress, and I only wish we could find a way to do it for all of our children... And I think the photos are triggers for writing ... they definitely make for more depth in the assessment.

Claire recognised that narrative assessments are formative when they “give teachers clear outlines of what the kids can do and their next learning steps” providing clear information about ongoing pedagogical practice and reinforcing the belonging of all children within the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). Claire's value of school as community, and teaching and learning as socioculturally situated are reinforced by her acknowledgement of “special moments” in learning, and the importance of the achievements being shared with “Jessie and her parents”. “I know it's not easy” and “all the different things they try” are references to the complexity of teaching. Narrative assessments showed teacher courage and care as they took risks and creatively differentiated curriculum to enable authentic learning (Freire, 1998; hooks, 1994b; Monchinski, 2010). Claire noted that when teachers saw evidence of progress, even when

the steps may have been 'small' and not recognised within many standard forms of assessment, they were able to celebrate children's capability, and they may have felt motivated to keep their expectations of learning high for all children.

Open ended potential for learning

A label of disability is often linked to ideas of deficit and incompetence in comparison to a culturally constructed 'ideal norm' (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Kliwer, Biklen, & Peterson, 2015). Many disabled children are additionally subjected to a myriad of standardised psychological and medical tests in an attempt to 'learn' about the impact of their 'disability' and the effect this may have not only on their education but on all aspects of their life. Standardised psychological tests measure a narrow aspect of knowledge and skill and require a specific response given in a specific way. Such tests do not enable children who require differentiation of materials to respond meaningfully. Resultant diagnoses are often shared with school and attached to the children's school records. Princess Mia, Jessie and Hairy Maclary all had labels that described them in deficit terms, and they all have medical reports outlining their perceived limitations, based on testing carried out by specialists outside of education (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011). An update of the language used in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) (2013) means that children are no longer labelled 'retarded' but are said to have an 'intellectual development disorder'. The labels resulting from diagnostic testing are frequently used as evidence of children's 'disorders' or 'deficits', as families and schools attempt to secure funding to provide assistance at school to support children's learning (Mara, 2014; Wills et al., 2014).

Hairy Maclary's parents chose not to pursue any further psychological assessment of their son, following an unproductive attempt around the time Hairy Maclary turned six years of age. His mother described one of the tests administered to him. Anne said:

He scored zero and the level for someone scoring zero was 'less than 18 months of age; 'educably challenged' or something like that. He didn't score zero, he didn't do the test. He was more interested in the psychologist's computer - which he probably could have hacked into within five minutes ...

Hairy Maclary and his family's experience highlights the limitations of the testing process, and the potentially ongoing negative outcomes for children and their families of being viewed and measured in deficit terms. If a child is considered unable to learn, they are more likely to be denied access to high expectations and the rich classroom curriculum of their peers. For example, if early writing skills are determined by a child's ability to hold a pencil and to form letters, children who are unable to hold a pencil may be considered incapable of writing or of creating any written text and may be denied opportunities to learn relevant skills.

Narrative assessments reveal capability

Assessment that is formative recognises potential for ongoing learning. Narrative assessments based on children's strengths and achievements often show learning over time and set a learning pathway. This means there are expectations for ongoing learning achievement. Hairy Maclary's teachers celebrated his capabilities as they reflected on his narrative assessments. They recognised that they needed to ensure ongoing opportunities were available for Hairy Maclary to connect with others, engage in learning and develop meaningful relationships. When educators focus on strengths based assessment models, they may provide opportunities for learning to be recognised in less conventional ways. The following conversation between teachers Jill and Mel recounts an example of recognising and responding to Hairy Maclary's participation in a class activity.

Jill: Look at that story there showing all the different ways he has shown he can relate to people (a range of learning stories were on the table during the interview). That's the day he sang – I wish we had it recorded. The whole class were singing Happy Birthday to Sinead. When we sang in Maori we could all hear Hairy Maclary joining in.

Mel: Oh did he?

Jill: Yeah. It was awesome. Sinead (teacher's aide) was crying. Amazing, a kid who's basically nonverbal, people assume he can't do stuff and here he is showing he understands how to sing in Maori! I remember last year every morning Sinead said, "kei te pēhea koe Hairy Maclary" and he made a sound that was always the same – we know it was "kei te pai." Well you know what he means when you get to know him. And

then Sinead was always like “Ka pai”. And Hairy Maclary always looked so happy - he just loves doing what the other kids are doing if it interests him

Mel: incredible isn't it? His desire to communicate ... we just have to give him every chance to show us

Jill: Yeah. I like watching some of the kids talking to him. Seeing those normal relationships does your heart good

Mel: I learned quite a bit watching Sasha (classmate) with him. I realised he could do quite tricky things when the communication was there you know?

The phrase “*well you know what he means when you get to know him*” highlights the importance of relationships within teaching. This comment reinforced the teacher’s understanding that knowing the child is the basis of effective, responsive pedagogy (Alton-Lee, 2003; Kluth, 2003). The construction of capability is supported by educators being prepared to learn with and from those most familiar with the children. An example is the comment: “*I learned quite a bit watching Sasha with him*”. This comment can be understood as suggesting teachers did not see themselves as the experts in this research project. They valued opportunities to learn from others who knew Hairy Maclary well. The teachers, Mel and Jill, reported that as they came to know Hairy Maclary more deeply, they increasingly noticed and valued his capabilities and achievements. Without a deep knowledge of him and of the specific communication processes that supported his belonging, his strengths and abilities remained hidden, and opportunities for meaningful engagement and learning were reduced. While teachers actively celebrated Hairy Maclary’s achievements, his classmates were generally less impressed; for them, his classroom achievements were expected, normal practice. Hairy Maclary’s friend Sasha enjoyed reading books with him, both in hard copy and accessed on the computer. She used the visual supports available so she could engage with him in communication that extended beyond a single response to foster ongoing conversation. Her willingness to engage in multimodal communication was recognised by Hairy Maclary who often chose her as a reading buddy. Sasha said:

They (the personalised photo stories) show Hairy Maclary's clever. Even though he can't do some things, he's really good at the things he likes. He just decides what he wants to do. He's very smart; he brings me his pictures (visual communication symbols) from the wall. He asks for help – you have to know what he means ... These stories just show people who don't know him what he can do – like swimming – real swimming on his back ... It's good for everyone to see all the things he can do. He knows I'm his friend ... He likes when I sign.

Sasha's positive and reciprocal friendship with Hairy Maclary highlighted an important aspect of quality teaching for all children. When learning is based on children's strengths and interests, motivation and engagement increase meaningful participation. Sasha knew that Hairy Maclary liked to share books that featured photographs of him, and she liked to read them, so they connected through a shared interest. The personalised photo books enabled Hairy Maclary to demonstrate his reading capability in an authentic way alongside his classmates. While Sasha recognised herself as Hairy Maclary's friend, she was also an advocate supporting his belonging within the classroom and the school community. Such examples suggest how important it is to have educators who support the building of class learning communities where all children are acknowledged as having something to contribute.

Revealing capability supports teaching and learning

Educators at Beach Drive School wanted all children to gain pleasure from books and become successful readers. This required reading material to be motivating and at a level where all children experienced success. Every child in the school had a personal browsing box of books they could read. Princess Mia, Jessie and Hairy Maclary had boxes overflowing with personalised photo narratives. The principal, Claire, who taught all classes in the school occasionally, said that although she had been Hairy Maclary's teacher briefly before she became the principal, she did not know him as well as some of the other staff, and that she was not sure of his current abilities. She commented that she was supported in her teaching of Hairy Maclary after reading one of his narrative assessments.

Claire: ... they're (the narrative assessments) really promoting inclusion... when we started to use learning stories and I saw all the things he (Hairy Maclary) could do. We just expected him to do more ... I'm still blown away when I look at the photos of him swimming and I see him riding the bike and I see him being with kids in the playground - that's the good stuff that makes you stay in this job. And I remember one incident in particular, a year or more ago where at the end of the day the kids would often get up and let the other kids go ...

Anne-Marie: Oh call the roll sort of thing.

Claire: ... recognising names, you know, just to reinforce the letters of their names. Like I'd get someone up and say you can go if your name starts with the letter "T". And I got Hairy Maclary to come up and he sat on my knee and I said the letter name and he really quickly pointed to whoever's name started with that letter - he pointed and let them go. And the joy, the absolute joy in that wee boy's face, that he actually was, he was doing the same as what everybody else was doing. So if you expect it, the kids will respond to you.

Anne-Marie: Yes but you expect it ...

Claire: Mm. But I read a learning story in the staffroom that said he could recognise all the letters of the alphabet - I had no idea he could do that and I wouldn't have asked him to do that activity if I hadn't read the book. He's so much more clever than people give him credit for I think. It's the wee moments like that that make me keep finding time to step out of the office and back into the classroom.

Teacher expectations can frame pedagogical practice. As a teacher, Claire affirmed noticing children's learning success as encouraging the setting of ongoing learning goals that continually raised expectations. "When we started to use learning stories and I saw all the things he (Hairy Maclary) could do. We just expected him to do more". While this would appear to be expected pedagogical practice, Claire's comments illustrate how such evidence of success challenges perceptions of disabled children as less capable. As a principal, Claire was referring to the collective responsibility of all educators at Beach Drive School to

support all children to be successful learners. *“And the joy, the absolute joy in that wee boy’s face, that he actually was, he was doing the same as what everybody else was doing. So if you expect it, the kids will respond to you”*. Claire’s passion and love of teaching was fuelled by seeing Hairy Maclary’s joy (Kluth, 2003; Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 1995; Noddings, 2012). She recognised his joy as he was recognised as a capable learner; and as he recognised other children saw him as capable. She was proud of his learning in curricular activities. Claire recognised his belonging in the Curriculum *“doing the same as what everybody else was doing”*, and his potential to self-assess as he expressed joy in participating in and recognising his learning. The narrative assessment provided information about Hairy Maclary the capable child, which resulted in this mutually positive interaction.



Alongside Claire’s joy in the visibility of Hairy Maclary’s learning is her teaching ability enabling his capability. Her knowledge of his communication meant she differentiated the alphabet learning task so his knowledge was demonstrated through pointing. The teaching and learning was interdependent and mutually affirming. Reading the narrative assessments had supported Claire to include Hairy Maclary in regular classroom pedagogy. By paying attention to the successes Hairy Maclary was having, Claire was providing opportunities for future success.

[Accessible assessment reveals capability - the role of photographs.](#)

A feature of this study was that the assessments were owned by the children. This meant a commitment to making narrative assessments meaningful for and accessible to all participants. Children’s access was supported through an extensive use of photographs and computer software with a text to voice function (Pink, 2012; Rose, 2012). Photographs enabled all children to read the narratives and provided an additional layer of meaning (Bourke & Mentis, 2010). As text, photographs made visible facial expression and environment. Photographs offered information about the learning context and social interaction (Carr & Lee, 2012; Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010; Kellock, 2011). Photographs are also a recognised form of communication for the study participants, who are familiar with them and confident in their use of them.

The excerpt below from one of Hairy Maclary's narrative assessments within the learning area of English assessed his literacy skills in a way that he could meaningfully access. We read of Hairy Maclary's reading skills with his classmate Sasha and of his spelling achievement with teacher's aide Rata.

Hairy Maclary - Narrative Assessment - English

	<p>Hairy Maclary and Sasha are reading from Hairy Maclary's browsing box during silent reading time. His favourite book, 'Hairy Maclary and Zachary Quack', is always read first. He is sharing the reading of a fourth book. Hairy Maclary and Sasha have been fully engaged in reading for about 10 minutes.</p>
	<p>Hairy Maclary and Rata are doing spelling together. Hairy Maclary is practising spelling the words he is most interested in and is learning to type them on the computer. Rata asks Hairy Maclary how to spell a word, and he carefully selects letters from those given. Letters are printed in his favourite colour, red, and are velcroed to carpet board. As each word is spelt correctly, Rata writes it on her sheet and ticks the word. At the end of spelling time, Hairy Maclary takes the list of words he spelt correctly to the teacher. She rewards him with a token for '5 minutes choosing'.</p>


Tessa, who had taught Hairy Maclary two years previously, commented:

I can see he's reading and I can see he's doing spelling and the photos really show his engagement. There is no doubt he's a learner. But it wasn't till I read the comments that I saw where he'd read the three books on the desk and was into his fourth. There is no way he would have listened to four books when he was in my room - shows just how far he's come ... I can see how the spelling is all scaffolded and how he's not given too many letters to choose from. I don't doubt his spelling ability, but what surprised me was that he could sit at that task for what two, five minutes? That's huge progress.

Tessa's comments can help us to make sense of how important accessibility is if we wish to support children's understandings of their learning and their roles as learners. The comment "*I can see he's reading ... There is no doubt he's a learner*" suggests Tessa's knowledge of Hairy Maclary as a capable reader is made clearly visible to others who read the narrative assessment. It reflects both her belief in him as a reader and also her recognition of his progress since they had been in the same class. The statement "*I can see how the spelling is all scaffolded*" refers to the curricular differentiation that included red coloured letters, the use of velcro, an uncluttered learning space and a short list of spelling words. These are important considerations if Hairy Maclary is to be given opportunities to demonstrate and build on his learning. Without these adaptations, perhaps his learning would not be visible at all. Reading the photographs and the accompanying written text meant capability could be celebrated with Hairy Maclary, and the pedagogy that visibly supported learning could be built upon to create ongoing learning goals (Bourke & Mentis, 2010; Fleer, 2002).

An excerpt from Hairy Maclary's narrative assessment in art shows curricular engagement and the collaborative approach to task differentiation that supported meaningful participation.

Hairy Maclary - Art

	<p>Hairy Maclary pointed to Slinky Malinky (cat character in Lynley Dodd books) when asked what animal he wanted to paint. He guides the teacher's wrist to jointly create the painting. He decides when more paint is needed by moving the teacher's hand towards the paint tray. He directs movement of the brush. He is able to communicate an idea through art.</p>
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The assessment shows Hairy Maclary working interdependently to participate in a class painting lesson. While all the children were painting emotions, Hairy Maclary rejected this topic, clearly indicating that he wanted to paint a cat character from a favourite book. Fine motor skills required for painting were challenging for Hairy Maclary, but his initiation of shared discussion and subsequent guiding of an adult's hand resulted in a completed piece of work communicating a clear idea. Hairy Maclary's teacher's aide, Sinead, recognised the importance of reciprocal communication to both support opportunities to demonstrate his capability and also to respect that he wished to make a choice in his learning. Sinead said:


And I was thinking there's that whole piece of wall with all his visuals and stuff so that everyone can communicate with him, and then we look at the back wall (of the classroom) and see his cool work up there alongside everyone else's and it's like well if you use the communication on that wall (points to visuals) then you get to see how capable he is and you get the learning results on that wall (points to class art display at back of room).

Hairy Maclary chose to complete artworks in this way with Sinead and myself. He knew both of us well, perhaps a prerequisite to collaborating in this way. Quality relationships were pivotal to Hairy Maclary revealing his capability.

Making capability visible supports belonging

The use of narrative assessments meant children previously invisible in the assessment landscape joined a culture of success. As teachers had a means to recognise children's capabilities, they often become advocates for them, seeking opportunities to maximise meaningful participation in all aspects of the classroom curriculum (Kasa-Hendrickson, 2005). The following excerpt from one of Hairy Maclary's narrative assessments refers to a lesson that was intentionally timetabled immediately after morning tea, because this was a good learning time for Hairy Maclary.

Hairy Maclary - Health

	<p>As part of the class healthy eating unit the children were learning about sugar content in drinks. Hairy Maclary spotted his favourite drink, Coke, and independently positioned himself at the front of the class where he remained focused for the duration of the lesson.</p>
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Hairy Maclary participated in the lesson fully and independently alongside his peers. On a number of occasions following the lesson, the class teacher Mel spoke to Hairy Maclary about the photograph (above) taken during that lesson, a copy of which was on the wall beside his desk, reminding him how proud she was of his participation and concentration during the lesson. Through revisiting and celebrating Hairy Maclary's engagement, Mel helped Hairy Maclary to develop a positive identity as a learner (Wansart, 1995).

Looking for and recognising capability in children involves re-examining and disrupting deficit views of difference and diversity (Biklen & Kliever, 2006; Skidmore, 2002; Slee, 2011; Wansart, 1995). Being attentive to every child's strengths, interests, communication and achievements requires a democratic and ethical approach to teaching all children (Ballard, 2004b; Biklen & Burke, 2006; Terzi, 2005). When Hairy Maclary's learning successes are valued by the teacher and shared within the class, his peers are exposed to messages about capability and respect for diversity. They are able to affirm themselves and

each other as learners. When teachers celebrate the learning of all children, they support the belonging of everyone.

Hearing and learning from children's voices

It may be assumed that disabled children who do not speak or who have difficulty communicating are incompetent (Biklen & Burke, 2006). A teacher's belief in the capability of all children challenges this idea, and the risk of children being marginalised in their learning often because of communication challenge is disrupted as teachers inquire into ways those voices may be heard (Connor, 2014; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Lundy, 2007). A human rights-based perspective demands children's voices are valued. Social justice and equality in accessing an inclusive education for children with disability labels requires that disabled people and children's voices and perspectives are visible, heard and included in all matters affecting them (Lansdown, 2001; Office of the Children's Commission, 2016; Smith, 2015; United Nations, 1989, 2007; Wansart, 1995). Hearing children's voices begins with reciprocal, respectful and responsive relationships between teachers, children and their families, as teachers seek to know and understand each child (Kluth, 2003; Korthagen, 2004). This may be recognised as a professional responsibility for educators. Hairy Maclary, Princess Mia and Jessie required support to enable their voices to be heard, and each had specific communication goals co-constructed at their IEPs. Educators at Beach Drive School demonstrated an ethic of care as they collaborated to support each child's communication and agency in respectful and responsive ways. Teachers viewed children having a voice and perspectives to share as involving more than talking. Photographs were an important medium through which children recognised, consolidated and shared their learning progress with others (Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010; Pink, 2007; Porter, 2014; Rose, 2012). The photographs could be interpreted as reflecting children's voice. The teacher's aide Sinead described her own learning journey, and over time she collected valuable evidence of hearing, documenting and supporting Hairy Maclary's voice in a range of settings.

When I heard the words 'student voice' used at IEPs I thought well that's all about what the students say. Nothing to do with Hairy Maclary. But in the learning stories

you see he has a voice and the photos show ways he communicates. I kind of get what voice is now ... It seems odd but we can kind of listen to the photos ... and when you hear Bruce (Hairy Maclary's friend) talk about Hairy Maclary and what they are doing, if you didn't know any different you would never know that they aren't having normal like conversations with each other. I think as far as Bruce is concerned normal is whatever's in front of you ... Bruce just does what it takes and gets on with it ...

Sinead recognised that Bruce supported Hairy Maclary's belonging by "just doing what it takes" so they were able to communicate effectively. Hairy Maclary not speaking did not appear to be a barrier to his reciprocal friendship with Bruce. Bruce was proud that Hairy Maclary chose him as a friend and he saw capability in Hairy Maclary's multimodal communication skills. Bruce said "He does cool sign (language) with me and I can like read his face". For educators, the skills and understandings of Hairy Maclary's closest friends could also support classroom practice. Some children had intimate understandings of Hairy Maclary's strengths, needs and communication systems. They supported Hairy Maclary's voice by their interactions with him and their teachers.

Sinead recognised that communication was a much broader concept than talking. Sinead's comment "we can kind of listen to the photos" suggests a reading of visuals (Kliewer, 2008b). When educators "listen to the photographs", they recognise a way children communicate and engage with learning material and with each other (Biklen & Burke, 2006). Educators may respond to this by creating multiple opportunities for children to demonstrate their skills and knowledge and to be recognised as successful learners within the classroom community through a variety of communicative means (Laluvein, 2010; Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011; Rogoff, 2003).

Princess Mia's teacher, Jill, recognised the importance of listening both as an enabler of voice and to provide information about children's learning. Jill commented:

Princess Mia has been a good reality check for me. In the classroom it's always busy trying to get through everything. We all work hard to make sure we give children time to speak and present, but it's tricky making the time to listen. I know how much I learn about Princess Mia just by watching her with others but it's so hard to just stop, and

watch, and listen ... In the busyness of it all, it's easy to make assumptions without really checking. When I look at the learning stories, the photos of different ways she's joining in, I need that visual reminder.

... One of the benefits of learning stories is that it shows communication over time, whereas I often see something that's achieved, tick that off, then sometimes never really look to see if that learning is happening again and again in different situations ... the learning stories have so many examples of her using and needing visuals to help her understand and for us to sort of communicate better with her.

Listening attentively through slowing down, waiting, and observing Princess Mia provided evidence for Jill of Princess Mia's thinking, communication and capabilities. Jill said "*the learning stories have so many examples of her using and needing visuals to help her understand and for us to sort of communicate better with her*". These comments illustrate the importance of taking notice of the information in assessment and using it to inform teaching practice. Educators at Beach Drive School understood Princess Mia was capable and, as she had good hearing, there was often an assumption she always understood what was said to her. The reality was that Princess Mia often struggled to process language, particularly if she was focused on something else, the communication was delivered too quickly, or there were competing environmental stimuli overloading Princess Mia's sensory systems. Jill had come to know Princess Mia well and understood the complex nature of her communication, including the many functions echolalic oral language served for Princess Mia. Sometimes it was used as a comfort; sometimes it served to block out incoming stimuli (often when Princess Mia was reciting entire movie scripts); sometimes it indicated a state of well-being or of distress; and sometimes it was intended to engage with others. Jill used this knowledge to think about the teaching strategies she would use, how the environment was set up and how she could engage with Princess Mia. Despite this knowledge, Jill said Princess Mia often "*needed a visual reminder*" about differentiations required to enable her meaningful participation. The visual communication supports visible in the narrative assessments reminded readers of various ways to support Princess Mia's receptive communication, her active voice, their relationships with her, and

curricular differentiations required for her to demonstrate her capability (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Rinaldi, 2006; Wansart, 1995).



Hearing Hairy Maclary's voice required a commitment to supporting and responding to the various ways he communicated, both in his receptive and expressive modes. This included sign language, gesture, voice activated software, battery powered augmentative communication (AAC) device (Go-Talk), sounds he made, visuals and text. A narrative assessment focussed on communication was created annually with Hairy Maclary, providing all educators with knowledge that could be used to make his voice visible in the classroom curriculum and to create opportunities for meaningful relationships. Tessa, who had taught both Princess Mia and Hairy Maclary, described her initial scepticism about such a document. Tessa said:

At first I thought writing a learning story about communication seemed a little unrelated from the learning areas that we normally assess. But actually for Hairy Maclary and for that matter any other student, if they don't have the means to communicate then they really can't get very involved in the classroom. They end up being a sort of observer on the edge ... photos highlighting relationships and how he shows what he wants remind those of us who know him quite well to make sure we always give him those opportunities to you know talk. But more importantly I think for teachers and teacher aides in the future to see this sort of assessment will really help them to see what Hairy Maclary's voice looks like.

Tessa thought it important that all educators would benefit from seeing "what Hairy Maclary's voice looks like" so they could better communicate with him and look for opportunities to increase his participation in the classroom curriculum. When the adult version was turned into a child-friendly photo story, Hairy Maclary's peers were able to see ways that they too could interact with him.

An excerpt from his 2012 communication narrative assessment is included below and illustrates examples of effective communication. This excerpt shows Hairy Maclary and T. sharing lunch on school camp.


Hairy Maclary – Communication Narrative Assessment

	
<p>Hairy Maclary's friend T notices Hairy Maclary isn't eating the lunch he had chosen at school camp. T points to his banana and asks Hairy Maclary if he would like one. The response of clapping and smiling is a way we have all come to recognise as meaning 'yes'. T gets a banana for Hairy Maclary.</p>	

We see Hairy Maclary's friend T. using speech and gesture to converse with him. We see Hairy Maclary's response and notice one way in which he is able to say 'yes'.

The excerpt below shows the interaction between Bruce and Hairy Maclary as they organise their lunchtime activities.

Hairy Maclary – Friendship - Narrative Assessment

	<p>Bruce asks Hairy Maclary where he wants to play. Hairy Maclary points to the PE shed indicating he wants some equipment. Hairy Maclary increasingly responds to verbal requests with sign and gesture.</p>
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It is not only educators who can learn from the use of narrative assessment. Hairy Maclary's mother, Anne, said that reading the communication narrative assessment and seeing her son interacting with a range of people encouraged her to think his world could


indeed be bigger and more exciting than she and her husband thought possible. Hairy Maclary's mother valued the narrative assessment that focused on her son's communication. She said that:

... lots reassures me in this learning story. In that photo (above), Hairy Maclary is so relaxed you can just tell from his hand so they're clearly having some kind of conversation that makes sense to him. I can see that they're friends and you've no idea how reassuring that is to me ... Shows that you don't have to talk to have friends right? And hopefully next year's teachers will learn from this when they read the story - I guess that's the point of it?

The excerpts above show Hairy Maclary communicating effectively with a peer, being heard and being listened to (Lundy, 2007). While some peers communicated successfully with Hairy Maclary through asking closed questions and providing response options, Bruce's relationship with Hairy Maclary often involved conversations with multiple exchanges. Bruce's ability to communicate in this way resulted in a reciprocal and enduring friendship. It also reflected a level of depth in their relationship that supported authentic conversation. A reason for creating a narrative assessment about communication apart from celebrating Hairy Maclary's abilities is that knowledge of children's existing relationships and preferred ways of communicating may be shared with subsequent teachers to support responsive classroom and teaching practices. Hairy Maclary's capability was most visible when he could communicate in the way that best suited his needs at that time. This meant having communication supports available, having communication partners who understood the approaches and responded to the way that Hairy Maclary chose to communicate. This information could be invaluable to a teacher working with Hairy Maclary for the first time. Use of sign language was often Hairy Maclary's choice of communication mode when what he wanted to say was short, clear and required an immediate response. A growing ability to communicate meant Hairy Maclary's social capabilities led to increased peer interaction and opportunities to create friendships (MacArthur et al., 2005; Slee, 2011; Soto & Swadener, 2005; Taylor et al., 2009). As more members of Beach Drive School community learnt how to communicate with Hairy Maclary, he became more confident and increasingly joined playground play alongside his

peers. The importance of sharing multimodal communication was reinforced in practice. This also reflected a shared community responsibility for recognising communication as a basic right for all its members. The following excerpt is an example of communication within the school playground:

Hairy Maclary – Communication Narrative Assessment

	<p>Hairy Maclary chose to play football with classmates at lunchtime. He is signing ‘stop; to indicate he does not want to continue to play. He is using sign more frequently in the playground both to initiate and to respond.</p>
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When children can communicate together there may be less need for an adult to intervene. This is particularly important when we consider the concerns that have been raised about over-reliance on adults for disabled children at school (Rutherford, 2008). Sinead, who was supporting Hairy Maclary at lunchtime and took this photograph, understood her role as a teacher’s aide was to become increasingly less needed as children developed ways to work together (Rutherford, 2008). Sinead reflected that:

Not everyone knows how good he is at sign (language) - when he wants to use it, and the way he does each sign too. He’s smart enough to choose other kids to play with who know how he communicates. There’s lots of times now where I can step well back in the playground and just let them get on with it. It never used to be like that because he got so upset and overwhelmed but I think that’s all sort of changing as more and more people can communicate with him ... I know I always need to be close, but not like it used to be.

Sinead had supported Hairy Maclary since he started school and knew that his ability to be happy and to learn at school were inextricably intertwined with how he communicated and was listened to.

Another aspect of communication that supported working together was the use of adaptive technology. The AAC 'Go-Talk' communication device is visible in the excerpt of the communication narrative assessment below.

Hairy Maclary – Communication Narrative Assessment

	<p>Hairy Maclary is asked what his choosing time activity is to be after lunch. He clearly selects 'home'. M. suggests 2 extra activities before 'home'. Hairy Maclary accepts this, and selects 'computer' as first choice.</p>
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Hairy Maclary has not always had access to this technology. When Tessa taught Hairy Maclary, the Go-Talk was not a communication tool at their disposal. She recognised potential beyond enabling voice through this technology. Tessa commented that:

He didn't have this (Go-Talk) when he was in my class and I hear it's a learning curve for everyone in terms of programming etc. One of the advantages of this being in the learning story (narrative assessment about communication) is that it's a record of one of the many different ways that Hairy Maclary talks. A good record for new people coming on board the team. And nobody else in the school has one (a 'Go-Talk') and they're all interested in anything technological like that ... I see really good opportunities for children working together. And they (peers) do genuinely see him (Hairy Maclary) as hugely clever in using technology which is kind of cool because I think they focus more on what he's learning with and how well he is going and I never hear anybody talk about the things that are hard or the things he can't do.

Tessa referred to the Go-Talk as a tool that engaged Hairy Maclary's peers, creating ongoing opportunities for interaction where Hairy Maclary was the expert (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Kluth, 2003). Tessa saw value in a narrative assessment focussed on communication as a transition document supporting educators in future classes to see and to enable Hairy Maclary's capability. The narrative assessment makes clear that a conversation does not require both partners to speak with words. In the above excerpts, we see communication partners listening, supporting each other and engaged in meaningful conversation. We also see this as part of a natural interaction between two human beings. If we believe that learning occurs through interactions with others then we can understand the importance of these examples.

The narrative assessments reinforced that for teachers who "watch and listen to students, again and again there will emerge evidence of ability that escapes those who dwell on differences" (Rose, 1989, p. 210). The communication narratives reflected capability, friendship, respect, participation and care. As teachers listened to children, they came to understand the children's world through their cultural experiences, rather than the teacher's culture or the school's culture, and therefore to better support the children's communication (Rinaldi, 2006).

Documenting, reflecting and planning using narrative approaches helped teachers and children form relationships that supported belonging, participation and learning in a more holistic and comprehensive way. School staff and Hairy Maclary's family noted that it was the photographs alongside the written stories and interpretations that really helped them to listen to and understand Hairy Maclary and his voice, sometimes in ways that challenged their assumptions about what he was and was not capable of. Teachers and teacher's aides talked about and interpreted photographs as texts that they could read and interpret through '*seeing*' and '*hearing*'. Their own and the children's use of the narrative assessments and photographs seemed to act as a reminder to adults that speech is not a pre-requisite to meaningful communication, and that hearing children's 'voices' does not and should not focus only on verbal speech.

The voice of silence

Sometimes the children in this research were silent despite attempts to elicit a response. Research participants came to respect that silence could be a valid response. Silence did not necessarily mean that children were incapable of responding at that time. Silence may have been an active communication choice. At times it was difficult to know when to persevere with a particular communicative intent, and when to stop. Silence may have been the child's way of saying they did not want to participate or had nothing to say at that time (Lewis, 2010; Porter, 2014). It may have been reflective of some pedagogical behaviour. It reminds teachers to reflect on how they interact and work with children.

Listening to Princess Mia

As narrative assessment provided an approach to recognise success in learning areas across multiple contexts, educators were more attuned to noticing and recording learning. The excerpt below from Princess Mia's narrative assessment in English demonstrated how she had assimilated a communication strategy and meaningfully used the process to support Jessie's communication. The skill was recognised in a spontaneous social context and shared with Princess Mia and her team. Educators recognised the importance of Princess Mia identifying herself as a successful learner.

Princess Mia. Literacy



Princess Mia is using verbal communication with a physical prompt when she asks Jessie “Stir fry or vege wedges?” Princess Mia has recognised this approach is helpful when used to support her own choice making; and transfers that learning to support Jessie’s ability to communicate.

At times Princess Mia was unable to articulate a response and this caused her stress. People who knew Princess Mia well knew that offering her two choices as responses frequently reduced her stress. In the above excerpt, we see Princess Mia's capability and understanding of that process, demonstrated through meaningful transference of that communication strategy to support Jessie. Princess Mia assumes the role of teacher but also initiates an interaction that shows she is aware of Jessie's difficulty generating language. Claire the principal, who saw this interaction, was amazed. Claire said:

Oh my goodness! Look at that – that's so skilled. Look at those two. I had no idea Princess Mia could help others like that ... her parents are going to love seeing this.

Capturing this interaction enables the success to be shared, and also means educators could use this data to teach Princess Mia about very abstract ideas such as empathy. This example of Princess Mia's skill and capability interrupts understandings of disability and potentially reframes expectations and negates imposed limitations (Ainscow et al., 2006; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995). We can recognise Princess Mia as a tutor, an effective communicator and a problem solver who recognises a strategy she uses as empowering for someone else.

Responding to Princess Mia

Communicating with children who had a variety of learning and communication needs could be unpredictable and challenging. Research participants wished to work with the best intentions for learning and belonging. They remained committed to these ideals while also recognising the complexity of the teaching context. Despite Princess Mia's obvious skills and capabilities, there were times when educators felt unable to understand what she needed. In her role as teacher's aide, Sinead spoke of feeling incapable at times of providing the support Princess Mia needed:

I frequently get it wrong when I try to work out what Princess Mia means - especially when she's unhappy. Sometimes I persevere and sometimes I just walk away. I try to think what it might be like to be in her skin and what's going on in her head.

Sometimes I just apologise to her and say “I’m really sorry Princess Mia, I don’t know what’s wrong or what you’re trying to tell me and if you can’t show me I can’t help you.” Sometimes it works. Sometimes a wee space on her own helps ... I just hate it when she’s stressed and I can’t work out what’s going on ... can’t help her.

This comment was made reflecting on a time in the school day when Princess Mia’s class were going to the school hall for an assembly and, despite use of the usual visual support systems, Princess Mia did not accompany her classmates and appeared agitated. Sinead knew that there were multiple reasons for the range of ways Princess Mia might communicate and respond in a given situation. Maybe she was not given sufficient warning of the impending change in activity, and using a backwards timer with the negotiated time might have enabled her to move to assembly. Maybe she did not want the task she was engaged in to end. Maybe she thought it was windy and she did not want to go outside across the playground to the assembly hall. Silence may have been resistance, or it may have been a quiet request for assistance. It is only through deep knowledge of Princess Mia, a preparedness to misinterpret and a willingness to be flexible that the complexity of such situations can be unpacked and a resolution reached. Of importance is the desire for those involved to understand each other, and for Princess Mia to be listened to and to be treated with respect and care (Kluth, 2003; Monchinski, 2010; Wansart, 1995). Adults’ difficulty making sense of a situation means the situation is complex, not that the child or the adult are incapable.

When the school staff was open to listening to and engaging in collaborative conversations with children, the children often showed they had knowledge and understandings of each other that were important and helpful to the teachers. Princess Mia’s friend Maree spoke to me of the time when a new relieving teacher insisted Princess Mia be outside at play time, as it was not raining and she thought there was no reason for Princess Mia to be inside. Maree explained to the reliever that Princess Mia was terrified of wind and frequently remained inside colouring pictures with a friend on such days. The reliever respected Maree’s advocacy and both girls remained inside. Staff had agreed that helping Princess Mia become desensitised to the effects of wind was probably not a goal of importance at that time, and all regular staff recognised and responded sensitively to Princess Mia’s fear.

Enabling Princess Mia to remain calm and happy respected her fear and supported successful teaching and learning within the classroom. Maree told the class teacher Jill what had happened, and subsequently Maree, Princess Mia and I constructed a social story to support unfamiliar adults to understand and respond well to Princess Mia's preferences and fears (Gray, White, & McAndrew, 2002). A copy of the social story was added to the reliever's kit in the school office. The reliever's kit contained communication 'passports' - booklets that outlined effective communication and teaching approaches for children who required additional support. Maree's capability and advocacy supported her friend Princess Mia, and the relieving teacher recognised that the playtime break did not need to be the same for all children. This example supported Princess Mia's belonging and participation at school in a number of ways. She was able to participate at school and maintain her dignity when a major anxiety-causing event was sensitively managed. Her friend Maree supported her voice by sharing important information. The reliever respected this information and responded in an empathetic manner. These interactions demonstrate the power of recognising and responding to voice in everyday situations.

Hearing Hairy Maclary's voice as he talks about his learning

An important aspect of this research was listening to children's perspectives about narrative assessment. When children are truly considered to be learning partners they can inform pedagogical practice, and support future learning plans and initiatives. In New Zealand, all children are recognised as learning partners in both policy and research (Ministry of Education, 2014; Ministry of Social Development, 2016; Smith, 2015; Smith & Taylor, 2000). This includes children who may not speak and write in traditional ways. Children may be recognised as active participants and learning partners when educators pay attention to their unique communicative strategies and use them to support meaningful communication. The following excerpts from the transcribed data presented below, describe some of the shared roles undertaken in recognising and responding to Hairy Maclary's communicative capability.

<i>Laid out on table with Hairy Maclary watching, I put three personalised photo books (of narrative assessments), one running record, one self-portrait (piece of Hairy Maclary's art),</i>
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one of Hairy Maclary's storybooks (exercise book) and one of his favourite library books (Hairy Maclary and Zachary Quack). I asked Hairy Maclary to look at everything and show me his best thing. He picked up one of the personalised photo books about drumming in a school music workshop. I said "do you want me to read it with you?" He smiled at me meaning "yes ". I read the book to Hairy Maclary and he initiated turning the pages. I understood this to mean he liked reading personalised narrative assessments.

I asked him (Hairy Maclary) if he wanted to show me some of his good work from the personalised reading books. I put one of his browsing boxes of photo books on the desk. He pushed the whole box to the floor. I picked the box up and left it on the edge of the desk. He then pulled the computer sign from his timetable and gave it to me. I said "You like computer time?" He smiled and clapped. I asked what else he liked. He looked at his timetable and pulled off the 'cooking' symbol. I quickly drew up three columns on a large piece of paper headed "I like ", "I'm good at" and "I don't like" with corresponding face symbols. I put the 'cooking' symbol on the 'like' page, and he immediately placed the 'computer' symbol in the 'like' column. I gave him the 'music class' symbol from his timetable (I knew he didn't like music class) and he looked at the symbol carefully before putting it in the 'don't like' column. We continued like this for about 2-3 minutes with Hairy Maclary using symbols to say what he liked and didn't like at school.

Hairy Maclary then stopped and looked at me. I asked him if he was nearly finished talking with me. He signed "Yes". I asked him if he would answer another question. He signed "yes". I asked him what is the best thing at school and he pointed to the 'swimming' symbol which he had placed in the "I like" column.

I said to Hairy Maclary that he was very good at knowing about his learning. He smiled and clapped.

I asked him how people knew he was clever. He reached for the browsing box of personalised photo readers based on his learning stories and IEP goals, and pushed the box directly in front of me. He looked at me, clapped and smiled.

I understood from this that Hairy Maclary recognised that the personalised readers showed him to be a successful learner.

Hearing and encouraging Hairy Maclary's voice required a communication partner who was able to use visual supports and to read his facial expressions, gestures and signs. Difficulty communicating was not owned by Hairy Maclary, but shared by communication partners. Educators who worked closely with him affirmed his efforts at communication by telling him that he had important things to say and share, but the adults were not always as good at understanding him as they could be (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Lundy, 2007; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015).

For Hairy Maclary, the use of visuals such as Boardmaker symbols enabled connections with the curriculum content and with people. This process was interdependent and teachers knew the importance of relationships and personal agency to enact voice. (Kliewer, 2008b; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2007). His teacher's aide Sinead said:

Hairy Maclary doesn't attempt to talk to people who really haven't made an effort to get to know him. It's like he knows that friendships take time and he's very aware of who gives him the time. I realised that first when I was looking through some of his wee photo books. Same groups of kids with him in all the books really.

Similarly, a teacher, Tessa, noticed:

And if you think about Bruce – I see him with Hairy Maclary lots, he's just the kindest boy. And Hairy Maclary clearly likes him.

Often children who interact with their disabled peers may be thought of condescendingly as charitable or as pitying (MacArthur, 2013; Macartney, 2008; Macartney, 2011). Jill and Tessa saw authentic reciprocal friendships. Tessa knew Bruce as *"just the kindest boy. And Hairy Maclary clearly likes him"*. Hairy Maclary exercised agency by choosing who he liked

and who he wanted to spend time with. The reciprocal friendship enjoyed by both Bruce and Hairy Maclary was recognised by school staff and family. A label of disability was no barrier to authentic friendship.

Responding to diversity within standardised testing contexts

Standardised testing has been part of the assessment landscape in New Zealand for many years (Hipkins & Hodgen, 2011; University of Auckland & New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2016). However, the amount of and attention given to standardised testing has increased significantly in New Zealand primary schools since National Standards were introduced in 2010 (Ministry of Education). An outcome of such testing is the ranking of children, enabling comparisons to be drawn between who has or does not have particular skills or abilities (Wansart, 1995). Such outcomes do not show children's critical thinking and understanding. They do not show problem-solving, and perseverance, curiosity, creativity or ability to relate to others. These qualities are realised through skilful teaching and respectful relationships and are not measured through standardised assessment. When results of standardised testing are used competitively to make judgements about teaching ability, they may encourage teachers to work in isolation and risk damaging a profession that is strengthened through sharing and cooperation (New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011; Wylie, 2012). As an experienced junior school teacher, Margaret expressed concern around perceived limitations of some standardised testing:

I don't believe a one-off PAT (Progress & Achievement Test) gives you an accurate picture of any child whatsoever, because of the fact that it's a snapshot in time, it's what that child can do on that day. It's such a narrow test. So if they're in a bad mood because something's gone on at home, it's not going to capture their learning. If they don't understand how the test works, or they have no concept of what's being tested, it's not going to tell much that's any use. So if they're tired, it's not going to give you an accurate picture of what they can do. If they're just happening to look at the person's answers next to them and they're sitting beside the right person, it's not going to give you an accurate picture of what they can do. Whereas the learning stories, it's

personalised to that child, it gives you a picture over time, and it's very specific. And it tends to be more positive, it tells you what they can do rather than just show you what they can't do... and also it's what they do in early childhood. If it's valid for early childhood, why is it not valid for school? And National Standards? I don't believe in them, because children learn at different rates, and also some things that are important for some children are not as important for other children. And I believe learning stories really capture important learning. It shows how much learning is actually happening at school. Shows Jessie is really able – National Standards would never do that ...

Margaret raises many important ideas about the purpose and outcomes of assessment. She expressed concern that the measures used within some standardised assessments marginalised teaching and learning in subject areas such as physical education, art and science. She recognised that a “*narrow test*” which is a “*snapshot in time*” will not provide an “*accurate picture of any child*” or of their learning (New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011). In contrast, narrative assessment often includes a series of connected assessments or strings and, by creating a context that includes previous knowledge and next learning steps, is recognised as assessment over time (Ministry of Education, 2009a; Moore et al., 2008). Rather than comparing a child's learning and progress against others, as an ipsative approach, narrative assessment uses the child's previous learning as a guide to current and possible future pedagogical practice. Margaret's experience tells her assessment makes little sense to children when the content is foreign and unconnected to their learning experiences (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012). She identifies valid assessment as that which responds to the “*different rates*” at which “*children learn*” and situates the assessment within the children's cultural experiences (Carr, 2009; Fler, 2002; Macfarlane, 2004; Wiliam, 2011a; Wilson, 2008). She states that narrative assessment is an authentic approach which “*captures important learning*” over time and shows that children are “*really able*” in a way that “*National Standards would never do*” (Hatherly & Sands, 2002; Williamson et al., 2006).

Teachers in this research understood the challenges inherent within many assessment approaches regularly used in school, but were all committed to assessing and taking

responsibility for the teaching and learning of all of the children in their classes. One teacher, Tessa, commented that:

If I tried to do a normal running record (a diagnostic reading test) with Hairy Maclary I'd get nowhere and he'd have a really low score suggesting he can't read. But I watch him flip through stuff on the computer and he can read alright.

Another teacher, Rachel, suggested that:

I'm not saying we don't use any standardised testing at all, but we should be using testing that's appropriate for each child ... learning stories are like the opposite of standardised testing. Learning stories start with the children ... not with a standard. It (learning stories) starts with their strengths not by looking for their weaknesses.

Wansart (1995, p. 175) suggests standardised tests are helpful if “interpreted carefully within the context of the competent aspects of students’ lives”. They provide information that can be used formatively to support teaching. Skilled teachers recognise when it may be useful to use a standardised assessment tool, based on their knowledge of the child’s ability and the requirements and format of the test. While Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) are required to be administered in a particular way, Jill adapted the process to enable Princess Mia’s participation in a standardised test (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2016). Jill said:

Sometimes Princess Mia has done a bit of the PAT in reading vocabulary. The bits she can do. Like she's involved in all the spelling tests and things in class. And so she has got a level in spelling ... Some of the diagnostic tests are fine, but mostly for the children we're talking about, it's a joke, the narrative assessments tell me so much more.

Recognising Princess Mia’s strength in spelling, Jill suggested to Princess Mia that she could do the class spelling test with support. Providing support meant the test was carried out with Princess Mia in small chunks over three days, at times when a teacher’s aide was available and when Princess Mia was happy to do the work. The test format required children to write words as they were read by the teacher, with words organised in

increasing levels of difficulty. The teacher's aide supported Princess Mia by saying each spelling word, then repeating it slowly emphasising each syllable. Children were able to stop writing when they felt the challenge had become too great. Unlike many of her peers, Princess Mia did not choose to stop. Her advanced skills in phonetic awareness meant she continued to record sounds as she heard them. Princess Mia scored highly in the test. This high score did not reflect Princess Mia's contextual ability to record words correctly; for her it was a test of translating phonetics onto paper.

Within the regular class assessment programme in spelling, Jill supported Princess Mia's participation by letting her sit separately from her peers (as she preferred space around her), allowing her to repeat each word aloud before she wrote it down, and not calling the next spelling word till she could see Princess Mia had recorded each response. Jill's actions made the spelling programme less stressful for Princess Mia, and would have supported the success of other children during the testing process who would also have benefited from hearing Princess Mia repeat what the teacher said and from the extra time taken to administer the test (Black-Hawkins, 2010; Slee, 2011). Like all her classmates, Princess Mia's confidence grew as scaffolded teaching enabled expectations to be achieved (Alton-Lee, 2003; Daniels, 2012).

Reading narrative assessments enabled Margaret, who had taught Princess Mia four years previously, to reflect on Princess Mia's progress and on authentic teaching and learning, as she recognised her skills and learning in multiple strands of the English learning area (Ministry of Education, 2007). Margaret commented that:

I hear people talking about how well she (Princess Mia) is doing, but for me seeing her sitting calmly doing the spelling test on the mat (viewed narrative assessment including such), real classwork not just fill-in stuff that's lovely, and I know she doesn't like being too close to people sometimes but seeing her working like that - her parents must be so proud of her ... and the photo of her reading at her desk those books with her photos clearly makes sense to her ...

In New Zealand primary schools, much of junior mathematics assessment involves structured interviews between a child and their teacher (Ministry of Education, 2016c).

Speech is a precursor to scoring well in these assessments (Kliewer, 2008b). For children like Hairy Maclary who do not speak, it is very difficult to prove capability within such assessment practices. Teachers recognised Hairy Maclary's potential in mathematics, and they collaboratively differentiated curriculum goals and teaching to support authentic and purposeful learning. His narrative assessment in mathematics recorded stories of success with measuring, using money, sequencing and managing time, linked to Curriculum objectives (Ministry of Education, 2007). His teacher, Mel, had commented that Hairy Maclary's narrative assessment in mathematics had meaning and "*belongs in my assessment folder*". She added:

Sending him (Hairy Maclary) and a friend off to the dairy with Sinead (teacher's aide) to buy milk for morning tea is real meaningful maths ... he matches the picture on his visual (to get the correct milk from the chiller). He hands over the money and waits for the change. When he gets back to school he insists on putting the milk on Claire's (the principal's) desk ... At the moment he is working with one dollar and two dollar coins but he'll move to five dollar and ten notes next ... you see maths as reading when you think about making it all work for Hairy Maclary.

The well-being of children is supported in classrooms where differentiated teaching and learning supports capability of all (Connor & Gabel, 2013; Rioux, 2014; Slee, 2011). Mel creatively supported Hairy Maclary's ongoing mathematical learning in a holistic and practical way (Black-Hawkins, 2010). Opportunities to support literacy development were recognised and embedded within the mathematics planning (Kliewer, 2008b). As teachers differentiated activities to meet objectives, Hairy Maclary was able to participate in learning opportunities alongside his peers.

National Standards: A dilemma in inclusive practice

When the purpose of assessment is to improve teaching and learning, it is difficult to understand how results from testing a small and narrow aspect of curriculum can address or contribute positively to the complexity of teaching and learning (Donaldson, 2012; Torrance, 2014; Wiliam, 2011a). What children can do may be overlooked or ignored as the potentially rich opportunities within the New Zealand Curriculum are reduced to meet

narrow testing outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2007). It can be harmful for scores on a test to be considered the summative truth of a child's ability. Jill described the purpose of assessment as "start(ing) with what they can do and move(ing) on", recognising the importance of knowing each child and building on current abilities. Narrative assessment reveals many truths about children's capability and supports teachers in their practice, as expressed by Jill in her comment, *"standardised tests show me what he can't do... whereas learning stories show me there's lots of things actually he can do. It's a credit-based assessment - credit for Hairy Maclary, and credit for teachers"*. Jill suggested that narrative assessment made the relationships and practices of teachers visible and therefore available for critical reflection and change. Testing focuses on the individual in isolation from their peers and teachers. The thinking and practices of teachers and co-construction of knowledge, skills and attitudes are of lesser importance within a system that expects children to be measured against and conform to predefined norms and standards. When test scores resulted in children being labelled as failures, teachers failed alongside the children they were unable to 'successfully' teach to a prescribed standard.

Educators in New Zealand have struggled to make sense of how national standards can support the construction of all children as learners (New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011; Thrupp & White, 2013). Jessie's teacher and SENCO, Rachel, viewed her teacher role as building on the strengths of every child in her class, and considered narrative assessment to be a respectful approach that supported equitable access to meaningful engagement in the Curriculum (Florian, 2014a; Ministry of Education, 2007, 2009c). She recognised assessment as a powerful tool for looking holistically at a child. Rachel said:

I don't think it (National Standards) work for 50% of our – or I would say for even more than that of kids in my class – very few kids are meeting the National Standard in maths ... The strengths of the learning stories are that everyone can see all those positive things that are being achieved as we go and it's sort of the visual, probably the visual side is actually the crucial bit for the kids. And I mean that's really good, because they can see their learning – they can almost self-assess. There's me swimming and whatever I was doing ... as well as of course everybody else can see that. So that's really positive. To me

it seems to be a very holistic way of assessing. We want to work with what our kids can achieve. That's so important.

National Standards fail to recognise the child and their multiple identities as a friend, a teammate, a learner, a son or daughter and a valued member of the school community. As a teacher's aide, Sinead came to know children well and valued the inclusion of many voices and perspectives of children's learning within the narrative assessments. Sinead suggested that:

People can see in the learning stories what Princess Mia can do ... then their expectations of what she can learn are raised ... Which is, raise the bar. And then she rises to that. The stories help us to focus on the best of her learning ... And those of us who see that learning can get it into the learning stories ... And it's the honesty and the joy. I love seeing the surprise on people's faces when they see photographs of Hairy Maclary doing things they never considered he could do. The photos are kind of a voice for him and they are always there in case we forget or need reminding like.

Conversely, when recognition of learning is restricted to the desired outcomes of narrow standardised assessments, children's "social, emotional, creative, and physical achievements" may go unnoticed (Black-Hawkins, 2010, p. 22). Hairy Maclary's parents valued reading of the depth and breadth of their son's learning recorded in the narrative assessments (Carr, 2006).

Anne: Mm. This means so much more than National Standards. Society reminds us continually that our son's a failure.

Anne-Marie: What do learning stories as such tell you about his learning?

Anne: Well, it tells us that he is more capable than often we give him credit for at home. Because he's clearly negotiating his way through life at school in ways that he doesn't do at home – ... Sometimes you think, well actually I didn't know he could do that. But we see it in the learning stories. The learning stories show for a fact that you

have high expectations of him ... Learning stories help us to keep our expectations high too – we know he's capable of learning – he just tricks us sometimes –

Mike: Good on him! Thwarted by assessment again.

Anne: ... I think it goes back to those expectations of Hairy Maclary and not having too high expectations, because everything for him has come at snail pace. Glacial pace really. But it's still coming, so it's positive, because it just gives us little hints of what he can do in a world, at home where he tends to rely on his family. But we don't have any measure, because there's no literature to say what Hairy Maclary should be typically doing, apart from the measure that you measure every child against. And if you're measuring him against the New Zealand Curriculum levels, he's not going to do very well. But if you measure him against life skills and the ability to...belong in the world, to be accepted you know. These stories show real progress, more than I dared hope really in some ways. He continues to surprise us.

Anne-Marie: Or if we measure him against himself.

Anne: Well exactly. Then we see learning. Well, yeah, photos of him achieving something or having fun somewhere is great – you know, it's the best form of feedback for him ... and for us as a family. I know you're all really good to Hairy Maclary, but the photos show you care. That's really important to us as parents ... Seeing him happy with other kids. Just doing normal kid things. Seeing people like him. You know as a parent how important that is.

For Anne and Mike, reading his narrative assessments affirmed and raised their expectations of his learning, capability and potential, as learning goals were realistic and achievable. They also recognised the importance of adults who are focused on his learning, but who also care about him and support his sense of belonging in his school community. While Mike and Anne never doubted their son's ability to learn, a National Standards approach was unable to recognise the learning gains that occurred across the breadth of the Curriculum over time. It also did not show what they needed to know most – that their son was happy, valued, and learning in his school.

Summary

The data in this chapter indicates that how educators view and position a child – as capable or incapable – significantly influences teaching practices and relationships and the child's learning, participation and success at school. Critical inquiry and reflection supported by narrative assessment assumes that learning and participation are socially and culturally co-constructed processes. This challenges the common assumption that the problems or barriers disabled children experience are caused by their disability, 'deficits' or differences. The educators and families in this research experienced narrative assessment as an approach that included and valued many voices across contexts to build a comprehensive understanding of each child and to support their learning, participation and success. Narrative assessments enabled them to see and hear each child and, perhaps most importantly, to celebrate their contributions, learning successes and capabilities alongside their teachers, family and their peers. This assessment model respects the many diverse ways that communications, skills and learning are evident. The risk of marginalisation resulting from the use of inappropriate standardised assessment practices was examined in contrast to the belonging that was visible within narrative assessment. National standards and standardised assessments were viewed by participating educators and families as occasionally providing useful information, but mostly as irrelevant, marginalising and demeaning to their children who did not conform to the norms that the standards and testing requires. Thinking about the discussion presented in this chapter can support the use of the following three guiding questions for educators wishing to make sense of inclusive practice:

Questions for educators:

- Do we have assumptions about capability that impact on expectations we may have for some children? What are these and do they need to change?
- How do we use assessment to recognise and support ongoing learning, participation and relationships?
- How do we work together as educators alongside families to ensure every child has a voice?

Chapter Five discusses ways in which quality relationships and interactions support effective assessment. Attention is given to how children are positioned within assessment practices, and to the role of teachers in supporting relationships that enable meaningful belonging of all children within the school curriculum.

Chapter 5: Relationships that Support Belonging

Introduction

This chapter presents data and analysis focusing on relationships and interactions within the narrative assessment process. Particular consideration is given to relationships between teachers and children; teachers and parents; and children with each other. The use of narrative assessment as a means to draw attention to meaningful opportunities for authentic curricular participation for children is considered. The use and importance of collaboration within an assessment context is also investigated. A 'discourse of belonging' or 'inclusion' is discussed and the ideas inherent within these discourses are used to examine the data. The chapter concludes with questions that may help educators critically reflect on the role of relationships in supporting socially just and inclusive pedagogy and assessment.

Belonging

An inclusive classroom teacher places children at the centre of all learning and teaching decisions (Kluth, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2011b; Skidmore, 2002). This means that relationships formed through valuing and knowing each child and their family provide the basis for creatively enacting the New Zealand Curriculum to support the belonging and meaningful participation of all children (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2011). Creating the conditions for belonging requires particular beliefs and values regarding teaching, learning, citizenship and community. 'Belonging' means schools focus on quality teaching and learning for all children (Alton-Lee, 2003; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Skidmore, 2002). Teacher belief in the value and potential of every child is the antithesis of a deficit view or 'discourse of deviance', which maintains some children are lacking in ability and potential (Skidmore, 2002). An emphasis on 'deficit' and 'deviance' leads to teaching practices focusing on remediation and alternative school curricula which is different from that experienced by their peers in the same setting (Skidmore, 2002). This chapter focuses on how relationships support belonging, and on the role of narrative assessment in this process. Within this work, belonging means children are central to all decisions made about

their learning and their assessment. Children's thinking is important in the data and the analysis within this research (Ministry of Education, 2011b).

Study participants' understandings of belonging

Belonging meant many things for the participants in this research. The principal, Claire, talked about physical belonging within the school community. She believed the community was strengthened by the diversity of its members. She said:

When I look out the office window and see Jessie and May walking around the playground holding hands it reinforces that - altogether that's the way it should be. This is the best place for Jessie to be, and best that other kids have Jessie in our school ... It would be wrong for everyone if she wasn't here.

May and Jessie were classmates and friends. Jessie was labelled as having a disability. May had no label. Claire believed that all children who live in the local community should be learning together. Her leadership and commitment to diversity within the school community and to inclusive approaches to assessment, teaching and curriculum helped sustain a school culture and pedagogy that supported belonging (Ballard, 2004a, 2012; Skidmore, 2002; Slee, 2011).

Claire recognised that narrative assessments could support belonging by making children's learning successes visible, and by revealing relationships and pedagogy that supported their learning and participation (Bourke & Mentis, 2010; Williamson et al., 2006). She commented that she liked seeing photographs of teachers in the narrative assessments. She said "*having photographs of teachers and students together in a learning story just highlights how important relationships are to learning ... The photos make it okay to show you care. I hope we don't lose sight of that*". Claire valued the visibility of an ethic of care in narrative assessment and had spoken against assessment processes that depersonalised learning and failed to acknowledge children's progress (Burles & Thomas, 2014; Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 2012; Purpel, 1989).

Teachers at Beach Drive School did not assume that the presence of children in classes meant they were included in learning. Knowledge of children and care about them and

their learning led teachers to understand and reflect on the complexities of teaching, and on how best to respond to the diverse needs within their classes (Florian, 2006; hooks, 1994b; Monchinski, 2010). Teacher's aide Sinead recognised the intricacy in creating an environment that enabled successful learning, happiness and emotional safety saying, *"Princess Mia won't learn if she is not happy but I need to know how to get the best out of her without causing major upsets. It's not easy balancing all this"*. Princess Mia's teacher, Jill, recognised the importance of relationships in supporting a sense of belonging, and said:

Sometimes I worry about Princess Mia about whether she feels she fits in. I want her to feel part of the class - the kids are fabulous that's not a problem at all; I just worry sometimes that things are hard for her, and that can make her quite unhappy ... It's a catch 22 because I want to push her the same as everyone else but she doesn't like when I try and move her out of her comfort zone ... but I know she can do it - it's getting that balance between being happy and secure in her routines as part of the class; and pushing the new learning so she keeps improving but without her losing it. One thing I've noticed is she's prepared to take risks with us and I think that's because she knows us so well; but with people she is less sure of she just sticks tightly to her routines - good coping strategy for her really ...

Jill wanted to "push" Princess Mia *"the same as everyone else"*. She often spoke to all of her children about *"being brave"* and *"trying new things"*. Jill wanted Princess Mia *"to feel part of the class"*, but saw a fine balance between risks that were manageable for Princess Mia and risks that took her beyond her ability to cope. Macfarlane (2004) describes this as setting high but achievable expectations. Jill held high expectations for the learning of all her children and understood that children's sense of belonging was part of her teaching role. Jill respected Princess Mia's need for predictable structures and routines. She observed that relationships involving trust, care and knowing each other well supported Princess Mia *"to take risks"* and that she frequently managed those challenges with success. This often involved complex scaffolding and gentle but steady support. Jill described her challenge around supporting Princess Mia to experience abseiling at camp alongside her classmates:

Remember how much we wanted her to have a go at abseiling (at camp)? She managed the climb to the top; I think Maree (her friend) gave her a hand. She wasn't happy up there though. I don't know if that was the small space we were in, or that it was new and different? Being up quite high? She had a picture of abseiling and she knew what that looked like, but I think she was pretty nervous. She wouldn't put on the harness, so we left her for a bit, we tried everything to encourage her but there was no way. She didn't even want to stay and watch the others; she just wanted to go back down to the bottom. There was no point pushing her - and actually it was really great she climbed all that way up to the top. We were a bit more careful about making kayaking work for her. That was wonderful – she loved it.

Teachers constantly make decisions about what they believe to be in children's best interests and about how they scaffold and adapt experiences to support learning and belonging. Jill cared that Princess Mia left school camp with happy memories and felt the experience of kayaking was more likely than abseiling to be successful and rewarding for Princess Mia. She recognised the need for all children to feel safe, valued and to belong within their school. This belonging equated with the notion of participation and access to authentic, achievable learning opportunities.

[The importance of recognizing children at the centre of learning](#)

Quality teaching involves placing children at the centre of all decisions made about teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2011b). Valuing children's diverse backgrounds, experiences and needs requires adapting and differentiating curriculum to ensure every child is learning and belongs. It includes recognising that the participation of each child in the class contributes to and enriches everybody's learning (Skidmore, 2002). This also means recognising a professional responsibility to teach children how to participate and to scaffold this learning. Part of this process involves teaching children how to self-assess in whatever form may be most supportive of their individual strengths and challenges (Bourke & Mentis, 2013).

For some of the children at Beach Drive School, learning progressions could be small and take time to achieve. Teachers and parents valued the formative approach to narrative assessment, which enabled them to recognise and celebrate the small steps and to plan further learning. The responsibility of supporting belonging also meant paying attention to the types of assessment being used and the consequences for the children who participated in these assessments. Hairy Maclary's teacher Jill commented that, prior to her involvement with narrative assessment, she had no knowledge of a meaningful assessment approach that recognised and supported the learning and progress of children who seemed to 'not belong' in classroom assessments. She stated:

I won't give a PAT (Progress Achievement Test) to Hairy Maclary. Makes no sense to score zero! He's not participating in any standardised testing. How we assess the rest of the class makes no sense for him – or some of the others for that matter. This is how we track his learning (holds up a narrative assessment) – it just makes sense. It would be so unkind and unprofessional of me to give a test paper to someone who doesn't learn that way ... So many of the kids just make no sense of PATs. And so much of their learning we know about, and we tell kids how well they are doing, but we really don't have a way to show it. Learning stories are a way of doing that. I'd quite like to put kids in groups where they write shared learning stories especially around topic work. Then everyone could be part of it (writing the assessment).

When learning, teaching and assessment are strengths-based, collaborative and respond to diversity, everybody belongs (Ministry of Education, 2011b; Morton & McMenamin, 2011). Jill recognised the formative role of assessment and the importance of children participating in self-assessment and reflection as a means of supporting their own and each other's learning and belonging (Bourke & Mentis, 2013; Wiliam, 2011a). An important consideration in this process is the role of quality relationships.

The role of relationships in assessment

Quality teaching and learning is built on a network of relationships with people, places and things, primarily those between teachers and children; and those which teachers and children have within the environment and the classroom curriculum (Alton-Lee, 2003;

Gunn et al., 2004; Skidmore, 2002). Assessment supports quality teaching and meaningful curricular access. Effective assessment is reliant on responsive, reciprocal and respectful relationships and interactions (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2011b). Relationships are based on attentively listening to multiple voices and negotiating shared understandings of expectations, roles and direction. Teacher openness to other perspectives and insights creates space for new understandings and opportunities for ongoing learning (Freire, 1998; Monchinski, 2010; Rinaldi, 2006; Wiliam, 2011a). The willingness of teachers to listen to multiple understandings about children and to work collaboratively with children, colleagues, outside specialists and families, challenges unequal power relations and the traditional belief that the teacher is the only expert about teaching and learning (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Freire, 1997, 2007).

Including multiple voices strengthens assessment practices and outcomes. Respecting children means their voices and perspectives are valued in the assessment process. Children's capabilities are revealed, understood and responded to by those who know them well (Lepper et al., 2003; Ministry of Education, 2011b). Central to developing these understandings are strong relationships that support children, their families, educators and others to share their work together with a focus on care and learning (Gunn & de Vocht van Alphen, 2010; Monchinski, 2010).

Hairy Maclary's mother, Anne, recognised the importance of relationships in his learning. She also recognised the use of narrative assessment as a tool to support these relationships. She described narrative assessments "*an honest snapshot*" of her son's learning, and she valued the teachers' holistic view of Hairy Maclary and his learning.

I guess as a parent you get an honest snapshot. The reality is he's always going to need support and that's fine. I want to see the support. I want to see how he works with others and how they work with him. (In the narrative assessments) I see maths that's meaningful for him. I get photos of him painting a picture, then the picture comes home and I know it's work he's been part of. You actually get a better report than perhaps you would for your more typically-developing child, because you actually see the interactions. They're real; you can see the joy on the face. You can see the connections.

Because Hairy Maclary can't force a smile and he can't fake affection, so being able to see that visually, we understand that he is having one of his best outcomes from schooling, and that's relating to others ...

Anne's comments suggest that, as a parent, she values the strong relationships between educators and her son. Referring to narrative assessment as "*an honest snapshot*" suggests Anne felt reassured by the authentic evidence. Describing "*his best outcomes from schooling*" as "*relating to others*", suggests interdependent engagement that supported belonging and citizenship was highly valued.

Relationships between teachers and children

Data from this study is consistent with other New Zealand educational research projects that have identified the relationship between the teacher and the child as being of paramount importance to successful teaching and learning, effective assessment and children's sense of belonging at school and within the curriculum (Alton-Lee, 2003; Guerin, 2015; Macartney, 2008).

New entrant teacher Margaret suggested that trusting relationships between teachers and children encouraged children to take risks and provided a space for their voice, agency and progress. She also suggested that when children knew that the people around them believed in them, they were motivated to try hard because it made them feel 'brave'. Margaret said:

Teaching kids with high needs can be incredibly tough. And you need that relationship with that child. I don't think inclusion can work unless you've got good relationships with ... the child and the specialists ... Children are more likely to trust us if they know we like them and really want them to be happy and to have friends and to learn. I want the children to know that I like them and care about them.

Learning stories can actually show social skills ... they actually show the honest social connections between the teacher and the child... working together in the classroom. I don't know of another assessment that shows that I think noticing the social skills actually happening it would open up the teachers to realising that the children can do

more. And that teachers can do more when there are good relationships ... I've seen Jessie being really brave with her learning and try things I know she was afraid of, because I think she trusted that people believed she could do it and they would help her and I think because she liked the adult she'd try much harder.

Margaret spoke of the challenge of “teaching kids with high needs”, but knew that successful teaching and learning was deeply immersed in positive personal relationships. Margaret valued that the sense of care she felt for her children was visible within narrative assessment. Margaret’s comments also reflect her recognition that learning could be challenging for Jessie. She admired Jessie’s bravery in attempting tasks that frightened her. Margaret recognised it was important that Jessie knew people believed she was capable, and would support her to take risks and to become a resilient learner.

At Beach Drive School, teachers’ aides primarily worked to support classroom teachers, not individual children, and therefore often worked across classrooms. This meant teacher’s aides acquired deep knowledge of a number of children, and the children developed relationships and learnt to communicate effectively with a range of adults across the school (Rutherford, 2008, 2012). Narrative assessments affirmed teacher pedagogy and reminded teacher’s aides of effective teaching strategies, helping them to “pull the learning together”. The collaborative nature of narrative assessments was one way in which teacher’s aides shared their knowledge and learned from other team members. Sinead, a teachers’ aide working with Princess Mia recognised that:

The learning stories kind of pull the learning together. When I read and reread Princess Mia’s, I learn more about her as a person. They are sort of a team thing ... So lots of people add to her learning stories really because of what they know, and then the people who read the stories and work with Princess Mia use that information to help teach her ... But we kind of all need each other because it’s learning for me too. Hairy Maclary’s learning can go to the next level much easier when all the people who know him kind of share what they know.

Sinead’s comments reflect the important role of narrative assessment in supporting authentic working relationships between educators who are focused on more inclusive

ways of working. As an aide, she contributes to and learns much from the work of others who are also supporting Princess Mia, Jessie and Hairy Maclary. Reading the narrative assessments helps her to understand the children's strengths, challenges and some of the strategies that are supporting their learning.

The excerpt below has pages from Hairy Maclary's personalised photo narrative celebrating his swimming success within the learning area of Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum. All those who read this book can see Hairy Maclary as a friend, as a communicator and as a fun-loving child. This story provides evidence of the importance of relationships in his learning.



For all children at Beach Drive School, swimming lessons were taught as part of the physical education programme. Curricular flexibility and adaptation meant a group of children including Hairy Maclary received weekly swimming lessons additional to those they participated in as part of whole school swimming. As a teacher, Tessa identified Hairy Maclary's belonging, not only in the learning area of Physical Education and Health, but within key competencies and values of the Curriculum (Appendix six). Tessa said:

When I think about Hairy Maclary's overall progress I find the swimming book touching. PE and being active is super important for him. He has real mana in the pool. He looks quite chilled holding on the side of the pool - or maybe he's knackered! There's so much curriculum in there. He's floating on his own - well that's excellence and managing self;

he seems so happy just chatting away and giggling. Real relating to others. That's friendship. And when he's upside down that's real trust ... I see the aroha. And real skill coordinating his legs and holding his breath. The book captures the essence of Hairy Maclary. (As assessment) it gets to the real heart of teaching because it includes the relationships that make teaching meaningful.

Tessa's comments reflect her ability to recognise the many ways in which strong relationships can support children's participation in curriculum. They also reflect her understanding of learning as being beyond the classroom and academic curriculum. Tessa referred to Hairy Maclary "*chatting away and giggling*", suggesting she celebrated his belonging and participating alongside his peers, where his inability to speak was irrelevant to their meaningful interaction. In this example, the relationships Hairy Maclary had with his peers overrode barriers to communication (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Biklen & Kliever, 2006; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995).

Relationships between teachers and parents

The sociocultural nature of narrative assessment creates meaningful opportunities for bridging home-school boundaries and strengthening collaborative relationships. Family can add insight to stories of their children which can deepen, challenge and affirm the knowledge of teachers and help them to understand children's behaviour and communication (Carr & Lee, 2012; Fleeer, 2002; Kasa-Hendrickson, 2005; Wenger, 1998; Williamson et al., 2006). The range of perspectives included within the narrative assessments was recognised by Hairy Maclary's father, Mike, as "*getting things right*". He recognised how the use of multiple voices could support Hairy Maclary's transition to a new school in the future. Mike said:

I hope all those learning stories go with Hairy Maclary to intermediate - it'll make everybody's lives so much easier - especially for Hairy Maclary and for us - shows how we got things right for him now - could avoid us reinventing the wheel if teachers read the stories, see what he likes, see what he's good at and just follow along from where he is at - now wouldn't that be something novel?

In describing this transfer of information as “*something novel*”, he is referring to the frustration felt by the number of times his family had repeated the same information about Hairy Maclary to a range of educators, and he suggested this could be avoided by the sharing of narrative assessments. The stress of providing the same information repeatedly can be recognised as another burden families may feel responsible for as they support their child’s participation and belonging in schools (Macartney, 2008; Macartney, 2011; Mara, 2014; Wills et al., 2014). If this stress is recognised, educators can support family and future schools to make sense of transition by providing strengths-based information that supports the recognition of children as learners. The use of authentic assessment to support transition cannot be underestimated.

The relationships between parents and educators can also be strengthened through the use of narrative assessment. Jessie’s teacher, Margaret, recognised the narrative process as helping significantly in the development of relationships with parents. She suggested that the value of photographs extended beyond enriching the assessment. Sharing of photographs provided a segue into conversations which led to the development of collaborative relationships that supported teaching and learning (Carr & Lee, 2012; Hatherly & Sands, 2002). When thinking about the strong relationship between the school and Jessie’s family, Margaret said:

It was the photos, I think Fleur (Jessie’s Mum) realised she could really be part of the assessments that way, sharing photos of Jessie doing lots of different things, and that lead to conversations, and that’s really how our relationship became more than the pleasantries – it became good, happy conversations about Jessie.

The establishment of a strong relationship between home and school allowed opportunities for information to be shared and for successful strategies to be used consistently across environments to support Jessie’s learning and well-being. An example is when Margaret noticed times when Jessie repeatedly asked an adult the same question. Receiving a consistent answer did not change the pattern of asking. An adult who didn’t know Jessie, her communication and abilities might assume she did not understand the given answer or that this repetitive pattern was purely an expression of Jessie’s ‘disability’.

Margaret discussed this pattern of behaviour with Jessie's mother, Fleur. Fleur explained that the purpose of Jessie's repetitive questioning was to check if the answer remained the same. Jessie was looking for consistency and predictability. This questioning behaviour increased when Jessie was overwhelmed by challenge or change. The more anxious Jessie became, the more important it was for her to seek a consistent answer to help her manage her feelings. Understanding the purpose of this behaviour meant those working with Jessie could recognise if she was feeling anxious, reassure her and take action to reduce her anxiety. Margaret said:

She (Jessie) knew I had a cat ... I had no idea that when she kept asking me all the time if I had a cat that it was an indication of her rising stress levels ... after talking to Fleur I thought that while a visual timetable helped her (Jessie) understand and follow the sequence of a school day, that she was often stressed I think by not knowing how long each activity would last for, and how fast she would be expected to move to the next activity. Fleur said they used a backwards timer at home so she (Jessie) knew how long she had to do something. We got one at school and did the same thing and I saw how much easier it became for her to manage those changes ... but we just didn't know. She coped perfectly fine once we put the timer in place and the questioning mostly just dropped away Actually lots of kids love that timer; you know just so they could see what time looked like. The stress was interfering with her (Jessie's) school work, but once we knew and dealt to it, she was able to settle and just get on with her work ... I really appreciate having a good relationship with Fleur, they (parents) know Jessie so much better than I ever will and it's so helpful to me. I wonder if they know how much I appreciate it.

In this example, Jessie's capability was being masked by behaviour that was preventing her access to learning. Meaningful relationships between teachers and parents enabled the sharing of knowledge that supported teachers to understand the purpose and meaning of communication and behaviour, and to reflect on and respond in ways that facilitated teaching and learning. Differentiation of the class timetable which supported Jessie was the use of the backwards timer (Different Roads to Learning, 1995), and Margaret noticed "*lots of kids love that timer*". Differentiations that supported the belonging and learning of Jessie

were equally valuable for many other children. Quality teaching for Jessie was also quality teaching for the rest of the class (Alton-Lee, 2003; McIlroy, 2015).

The use of photographs, multiple voices and accessible language in narrative assessments creates opportunities for authentic communities of practice to support teaching and learning (Bourke & Mentis, 2010; Williamson et al., 2006). Children's learning outcomes are enhanced when teachers and other education professionals focus their combined skills and understanding alongside the deep knowledge and expertise of families (Carr & Lee, 2012; Education Review Office, 2004; Education Review Office, 2015c; Hattie, 2009; Kearney, 2014). One of the teachers in this study, Jill, appreciated narrative assessments as supporting conversations where family and teacher perspectives and knowledge could inform each other.

A learning moment for me was in the IEP when E (Princess Mia's Mum) thanked us for the learning stories. She said the stories showed her that we believed Princess Mia was clever, and they knew that as a family, but didn't know that anyone else would be excited about the things they were ... It really stuck with me how important it is to know about what families think and what they know. I think the stories might have helped them to trust us more. It was never something I'd even thought about. It made me think about really focusing on Princess Mia's strengths and making sure we built on those in the classroom and just stop worrying about the things that she's finding really difficult.

Jill's comments reflect her understanding of the impact of family knowledge on her teaching practice. She valued the trust in the home/school relationship that enabled the sharing of such valuable knowledge. Quality relationships identified strengths on which successful teaching and learning could grow.

Relationships between children

Belonging and learning at school is supported by reciprocal relationships between children (Connors & Stalker, 2003; Connors & Stalker, 2004). As children work and play together, they develop a sense of community. At Beach Drive School, the children often assumed a shared responsibility for each other's well-being, as an ethic of care and a sense of social

justice played out within relationships and the school environment (Ballard, 2012; Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 2012). Some research suggests that peers of disabled children take on a role of 'helper' which can restrict the role of friendship and create unequal relationships between children (Connors & Stalker, 2007). Narrative assessments in this research showed the development of friendships that were reciprocal and mutually supportive (MacArthur, 2013; MacArthur et al., 2005). Adults facilitated social interaction by engaging with Hairy Maclary in an activity that he enjoyed, such as playing with hoops. The adult would ensure extra hoops were close by so other children could join in and, once a small group of children were playing, the adult would step back from the activity. While an adult was necessarily present at all times of the day to support Hairy Maclary's well-being, supporting adults focused on blending into the background to create opportunities for spontaneous interaction with peers. Observing and documenting playground activity and developing friendships in narrative assessments, provided valuable insights and information that supported Hairy Maclary's belonging. A narrative assessment about friendship included a photograph of Hairy Maclary and his friend Bruce walking together in the playground towards the slide. Bruce said:



I like the photo of us going to the slide - you know we don't go on the slide we just play with stones or the ball (on the slide). He likes playing at the slide lots. I wish there was a photo of me and Hairy Maclary swimming - that's really fun. He goes much faster in the water than on the grass at school. He sits on the bottom (of the pool) for ages and ages. He must be real good at holding his breath ... He's one of my best friends you know. Mum said he can come to my party.

Bruce and Hairy Maclary shared a friendship that was reciprocal and natural. They sought each other in the playground and often chose to work together in the classroom. Bruce was supported to develop multi-modal communication skills to strengthen his relationship with Hairy Maclary. Bruce's comments reflect his recognition of Hairy Maclary's unique strengths and of Hairy Maclary as one of his best friends. Having friends is important to children's well-being and learning at school. Friendship supports belonging and a sense of being valued, as children enjoy the company of their peers, sharing activities they enjoy together (Connors & Stalker, 2007; MacArthur, 2002, 2013; MacArthur et al., 2005).

Princess Mia's friend Maree was surprised when others did not always recognise Princess Mia's capability. Maree perhaps knew Princess Mia better than many of the adults who taught and supported her learning. Maree's kindness, empathy, deep understanding and friendship with Princess Mia was recognised by teachers, her family and classmates. The benefits of their relationship were not one sided, and Maree's literacy skills were consolidated through practicing reading with Princess Mia (Limbrick, McNaughton, & Glynn, 1985). Maree became an advocate as part of her friendship with Princess Mia, and their relationship was mutually valuable. The following conversation between Maree and myself reflects Maree's understanding of her friend Princess Mia and her skills and knowledge:

Anne-Marie: What do you think of these stories? (Together we were looking at a collection of Princess Mia's personalised narrative assessments)

Maree: She can do lots of stuff. People think that people with disabilities can't do stuff but these books show that they can do lots - like be friends and share and learn. A lady (a visiting educational psychologist) came in the other day and she was watching Princess Mia writing on her computer. She (the lady) got all jumpy and was clapping and stuff. It's like, well Princess Mia hates clapping so she shouldn't do that. And she's (Princess Mia) been typing stories for ages... she (the lady) should look at her (Princess Mia's) books ...

Anne-Marie: ... What else do these learning stories tell you about Princess Mia?

Maree: She's a normal ordinary girl – she is. She's a happy girl and she's lots smarter than people think. I'd be scared to go to Australia without Mum and she even went on a roller coaster.

The educational psychologist observing Princess Mia had been focusing on specific skills related to literacy. Maree, with a broader understanding of Princess Mia as a learner and a friend, brought a different perspective to understanding the learning and the environment. When Maree said “*she should look at her books*”, she was referring to the narrative assessments (personalised photo stories) that provided information about Princess Mia’s reading ability within a sociocultural context by including adaptations and differentiations that enabled her to be a successful reader (Carr, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2009c; Morton, 2012). Adults in specialist roles who work outside the school sometimes focus on narrow aspects of teaching and learning and see children infrequently. Sociocultural-based pedagogy recognises the importance of the context and relationships. When the whole child and their prior learning and experiences are not visible or recognised, there is a greater risk of focusing on perceived ‘deficits’, remediation and limiting what are assumed to be the effects of individual impairments (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Macartney, 2008). Listening to a range of voices, particularly those of children, potentially disrupts deficit thinking to focus on supporting strengths and capabilities (Kliwer, 2008b; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014; Rinaldi, 2006; Terzi, 2005). Maree knows many of Princess Mia’s skills through their personal interactions and suggests that others should take the time to get to know her. These comments are echoed in research (Biklen, 2000; Biklen & Burke, 2006; Biklen & Kliwer, 2006; Guerin, 2015; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995).

Supporting belonging through an ethic of care

Effective teaching pedagogy is enhanced by teacher knowledge of children that emerges from caring, respectful relationships (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Gabel, 2001; Monchinski, 2010; Slee, 2011). Quality teaching relies on an ethic of care. Caring about children is analogous with respectful relationships. This includes taking the time and creating opportunities to get to know the children and to connect with important people in

their lives. Caring relationships and working together mean authentic belonging is a more likely outcome of schooling.

Caring about children includes valuing their social and emotional wellbeing and ways in which school supports this (Clapton, 2008; Monchinski, 2010; Nelson, 2013; Noddings, 2012). Jessie, Princess Mia and Hairy Maclary each constructed, with support, a personalised photo story book annually to share with others what made them happy at school. An excerpt from Princess Mia's book below shows photographs that provide evidence of her relationships with teachers and children, and includes the text she co-constructed.

I Am Happy When ...	
 <p>I am happy when I play with my friends.</p>	 <p>I am happy when I am with Maree.</p>
	

<p>I am happy when my teacher tickles my neck and I tickle her neck.</p>	<p>I am happy when I read books to the class with the teacher.</p>
 <p>I am happy when Mrs Claire reads my stories.</p>	 <p>I am happy when I'm dancing.</p>

This book was readily accessible in the classroom and was supportive of Princess Mia, the teaching team and her classmates. It provided a positive reminder of ways to support Princess Mia's belonging at school. Her friend Maree said:

I like this book, the photo of me and Princess Mia is when we walked all the way up the track to the abseiling (at school camp). It was really steep and we held hands all the way to the top. I like dancing too. Princess Mia always remembers the dances and what comes next.

Anne-Marie: What else do you like in the book?

Maree: The swimming photos and the photo of Mrs Jill and Princess Mia tickling. Princess Mia only tickles people she likes. She tickles me. Does Mrs Jill let anyone else tickle her?

Maree's caring and reciprocal friendship is evident in the way she speaks. She said "we held hands all the way to the top". The children made their way together as opposed to Maree suggesting she took a leadership role and guided Princess Mia to the top. The excerpt makes visible a rich diversity of school experiences and relationships which combine to

make Princess Mia feel happy. There are social connections with children and teachers, curriculum participation and receiving feedback from the principal about her learning. The principal, Claire, said:

The happiness books are useful for those who don't know some of these children so well. You really see there's a loving relationship going on when Princess Mia's involved in reciprocal tickling - how special is that? ... Having books like this, sends a message across the school that caring about our kids is fundamental to the work we do.

Claire suggested that caring is visible in a love for children that drives educators to work in ways that support the learning and belonging of all children in their classes (Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 2012).

Sometimes Tessa (teacher) found sharing her perspectives and teaching practices with families challenging, because it invited their scrutiny, but she remained committed to honest, authentic relationships and collaboration with family members. Tessa said:

Showing I care makes me vulnerable but actually that's okay, we're all human, we all get things wrong. I know when I open myself up to parents I leave myself a bit more open to criticism. Some teachers think open relationships with parents makes you unprofessional but I don't see it that way. I care about the children and making school work for them so I'm going to keep taking that risk. If I'm going to do a good job with Princess Mia, then I need the knowledge and support of her parents to get the information I need ... It's the people stuff that's important in the learning stories. When I read them it kind of reinforces to me that it's okay for me to show I care about kids. We just want school to be the best it can for our special needs kids - for all our kids, but I think our special needs kids need extra care to make school work.

As a teacher, Tessa believed an ethic of care, including close relationships with families, was integral to supporting children's learning and formed an important aspect of her pedagogy. She was open to her thinking and practices being challenged by family knowledge and perspectives, and she saw this as a necessary and productive part of her professional role and relationships.

At times there is confusion between an ethic of care and people caring (Monchinski, 2010). This may result in deficit positionings of understanding disability through charity discourses where children may be pitied and their access to opportunities limited. An ethic of care recognises educator responsibility for setting high but achievable expectations whilst also supporting and respecting individual strengths and needs (Macfarlane, 2004; Nelson, 2013; Noddings, 2012). The examples above demonstrate an ethic of care. Educators value the relationships that have been developed amongst and between themselves, children and families. They also recognise a need to understand learning in its many unique forms and actions. Educators are encouraged to scaffold learning and fade support as children become more inter- and independent.

Summary

The data in this chapter focused on the relationships that supported children's belonging and meaningful participation in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). Creating conditions at school that enabled belonging required attention to the values, beliefs and actions that support quality teaching and learning for all children (Alton-Lee, 2003; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Skidmore, 2002). Assessment is integral to quality teaching and is reliant on responsive and authentic relationships and interactions (Ministry of Education, 2007; 2011b, p. 5). Belonging in the New Zealand Curriculum was enhanced when teaching and planning focused on children's shared interests but also valued children's uniqueness and differences.

Including multiple voices strengthens the assessment processes and outcomes. By valuing and including a range of voices when recognising children's learning, the narrative assessment process creates authentic opportunities for reciprocal relationships between teachers, families and children that support belonging. Traditional power imbalances where a teacher is recognised as the educational expert are disrupted as the knowledgeable voices of families and children are sought and valued in the assessment process (Freire, 1998; Ministry of Education, 2011b; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995). The connections between team members visible in the narrative assessments showed deep care for children, and teachers showed commitment to improving pedagogy and learning

outcomes (Kliewer, 2008b; Ministry of Education, 2011b; Monchinski, 2010; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995). The discussion in this chapter can support educators to think about the following questions as they focus on more inclusive ways of working:

- How do we work together as educators to place children at the centre of all teaching and learning decisions?
- How do we understand an ethic of care in relation to assessment and learning?
- How do we create communities of learning where multiple voices are included in teaching and assessment practices?

Chapter Six presents data exploring the relationship between narrative assessment, teaching, learning, and the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007; Skidmore, 2002; Wansart, 1995). It considers teachers as learners alongside children and how narrative assessment can be used as a tool for improving teaching praxis. It explores the links between a system that can be both assessment-capable and accountable.

Chapter 6: Assessment that supports quality teaching and learning

Introduction

The data and analysis in this chapter examines the use of narrative assessment in relation to children's access to quality teaching and learning within the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). Key ideas from the Ministry of Education Position Paper on Assessment (2011b), the work of Wansart (1995) and Skidmore (2002) provide a framework that guides the structure of the chapter and the interpretation of data. The chapter concludes with questions designed to help educators critically reflect on the role assessment can play in supporting quality teaching within the Curriculum for all children.

Key ideas in a framework of inquiry

The key ideas are identified as the following chapter headings:

- Teaching is learning; teachers as learners
- A common curriculum for all
- Assessment, teaching and learning
- Building assessment capability
- Assessment accountability
- Supporting teacher confidence
- Professional development
- Multiple sources of evidence

Each of these eight headings is considered within the context of quality teaching and learning for all children. Research data is critically analysed throughout the chapter.

Teaching is learning: Teachers as learners

When teachers focus on recognising and supporting children's abilities, they become attuned to evolving stories of progress and success (Wansart, 1995). They understand that "teaching is learning" as they reflect on their own thinking and practices and take action to support children's learning (Wansart, 1995, p. 69). Reflexivity is embedded within teaching as inquiry in a cycle of teaching, assessment, planning and critical reflection (Ministry of Education, 2007). Teaching is not a skill to be mastered, but rather a process of ongoing learning in response to children, context and curriculum (Hanson, 2013; Jones, 2013;

Morrell, 2012; Wiliam, 2011a). As teachers recognise themselves as ongoing, reflexive learners alongside the children in their class, relationships of power are disrupted by interconnectedness and sharing (hooks, 1994b; Noddings, 1999). Part of this process involves recognising assumptions and beliefs and their impact on decision making. Educators within this project demonstrated this view through the ways they saw their roles. The SENCO, Rachel, recognised the visibility of teaching and teachers in the narrative assessment process as sustaining continuous new learning and development for all team members. She said:

I like the sort of humanness of learning stories. We say how things are and it's okay that we sometimes get things wrong ... (Looking at a learning story about Jessie's writing) this shows how we all thought Jessie was left-handed, and we tried to give her things in her left hand to help sort of consolidate that. And then we realised she was sometimes choosing to use her right hand so we all kind of backed off; we realised we shouldn't be trying to force it and we just decided to watch her for a while and see which hand was the most dominant ...

Rachel's comments followed a team discussion where a number of people recognised that Jessie's learning was developing differently from what educators had assumed. The team acknowledged their thinking and responses needed to change to support Jessie. Narrative assessment provided a platform that enabled teachers to collaboratively review practice and to discuss ways forward and changes required in response to children's learning preferences (Guerin, 2015; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015; Timperley et al., 2014).

Teaching can be thought of as a dynamic, responsive, inquiry-based and reflexive process involving ongoing development of both children's and teachers identities as learners (Hargreaves, 2007; Jones, 2013; Moore et al., 2008; Pollard et al., 2014). When narrative assessments are written collaboratively by children and teachers within class as part of their learning, teachers and children are learning together and from each other. The small excerpt from a narrative assessment below was co-constructed in Hairy Maclary's class by the children and their teacher, Mel, as they reflected on their shared learning of sign

language during the year. The text below each photograph provides an example of the multiple voices contributing to the assessment.

Learning a new language. By Room 6.



“The children were presenting reading plays in class and we were all watching. I signed to Hairy Maclary that it was time to be quiet. I was pleased I remembered the sign and I can see he’s really watching and listening to me when I am signing to him”. (Ms Mel)



“Bruce and Hairy Maclary are talking to each other. They are friends. They talk without using words”. (Sasha)

Mel: this was a useful assessment because it really captured what the children thought about learning sign language. ... I think it's good for them to see me learning as well in a really obvious kind of way with them Sometimes I couldn't remember the signs and they helped me out, kind of a nice reversal of the normal classroom roles ... We all learned sign to help Hairy Maclary but I'm grateful we all had that opportunity ... The way Bruce gives Hairy Maclary choices by using his hands works really well, and I use that now too.

Mel recognised herself as a learner alongside her children. She appreciated when children helped her to learn signs and was committed to supporting Hairy Maclary's communication, participation in the class curriculum and belonging in the school community. Mel openly recognised the value of learning effective communication strategies from Hairy Maclary's closest friend, Bruce. The boundaries between teaching/teachers and

learning/learners blurs when children and educators recognise and work together as equal members of a community of learners (Glynn et al., 2011; Wansart, 1995). Including teacher voice within narrative assessments and documenting teaching in action provides rich material for on-going critical reflection, evaluation and learning. In this way, narrative assessment motivates and encourages teachers to view and position themselves as learners. In the example, we also see how teachers and children can share these roles so that assessment is a partnership rather than a teacher led process.

The excerpt below from a narrative assessment in the Learning Area of English (reading, writing and speaking strands) shows Princess Mia reading a social story to her teacher, Jill. The social story, which had been co-constructed with the teacher's aide Sinead, is explaining to Princess Mia that "it is OK to have doors and windows open in the classroom sometimes".

Narrative Assessment – Princess Mia's learning in English



Princess Mia is reading a social story that she has written with Sinead to Mrs Jill. Princess Mia is learning that it is OK to have doors and windows open sometimes. Like the other children in the class, Princess Mia takes her story to read to the teacher. Three children waiting ahead of her in line indicate to Princess Mia that she can go to the front of the line, straight to the teacher. The children know that waiting in a line is difficult for Princess Mia, and were she required to wait, she may then not share her story. Knowing Princess Mia means the children are happy to respect her needs and enable her success.

This excerpt demonstrates the care and empathy shown by classmates to each other. This was visible in the photograph and explained in the accompanying text. Examples of care and relationships may often go unrecognised within the complexity and pace of the school

day (Clapton, 2008; Kluth, 2003; Monchinski, 2010). Narrative assessment allows for images and stories about relationships and learning within the classroom and beyond to be noticed, recognised, shared and responded to (Carr, 2001). Teacher's aide Sinead observed Princess Mia during this sharing time with the teacher. She commented that reading the narrative assessment text at a later date helped her reflect on her approaches to supporting Princess Mia. Sinead realised that the teacher had made a pedagogical decision that providing feedback to Princess Mia about her work was more important than her learning to wait in a line of children. Sinead had noticed that when Princess Mia read her story to the teacher, she had taken the teacher's hand for support. Other children in the class did not seek this contact, but the teacher's care for individual children and responsiveness to their individual learning needs was evident in the support she gave to Princess Mia, enabling her to share her work. Sinead said:

Just watching the natural way Princess Mia took Jill's hand for support - it was like she needed physical contact so she could share her work. I hadn't noticed it before but it was like more than holding hands, it was like needed to help with learning. For Princess Mia that wasn't soppy stuff it was about learning. I hadn't really realised it, it was just reading that learning story again made me think about how I could support her (Princess Mia) better, just make learning easier for her.

Sinead's comments reflect her emerging understanding of another perspective in the day-to-day practices of supporting Princess Mia. Sometimes narrative assessment can support educators to recognise the many small things done to support learning. This can be understood as making what seems invisible and natural more visible. This knowledge can support educator practice.

Sinead's comments position her as someone who pays attention to the many facets of information inherent in photographs and narratives. When educators reflect on what children say and do, they are able to modify their teaching practice in recognition of their ongoing learning (Cognition Education Trust, 2015; Lundy, 2007; Wiliam, 2011a). Using the narrative assessment as a basis, Sinead had positioned herself as both a teacher and a

learner. She used the narrative and her earlier observation to reflect on and improve her own practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Ministry of Education, 2011b; Wansart, 1995).

A common curriculum for all

As a statement of official policy, the New Zealand Curriculum is intended to direct teaching and learning for all children in English-medium primary and secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2007). It clearly signals a positioning of inclusion as a foundational principle. However, New Zealand's dual education system means some disabled children are taught in segregated settings and some children work within alternative curricula in regular schools, particularly at senior school level (Gladstone, 2014). Children's sense of belonging is threatened by processes that separate them within and from their communities. Conversely, when children experience a sense of belonging they are more motivated, attentive and willing to take risks with their learning (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008). Belonging and citizenship are about embracing and valuing all members of the community. All children learn about becoming good citizens when they are valued, belong and participate as full members of their communities (Ballard, 2003b; Kliever, 2008b). At Beach Drive School, Claire, the principal, believed in and took responsibility for every child's right to belong and therefore 'fought' at times to enact this right. She stated:

We would never say "no" to any student in our community who wanted to enrol in our school. That doesn't mean it's always easy and we often have to fight for resources, but if that's what students need to learn then that's what we fight for.

Claire's comments reflect her belief that all children should be able to attend their local school and work within a common curriculum. However, Claire's belief in creating a school community that enabled belonging for all children was at times difficult to enact when resourcing and support was inadequate.

While the Curriculum provides the principles and framework for pedagogy in English-medium schools, each school is required to interpret the curriculum document in response to community values and local need alongside Ministry of Education policy. A school curriculum attends to achievement objectives within the Learning Areas, and to the values and key competencies that support citizenship and lifelong learning (Ministry of Education,

2007, p. 39). A strength of the Curriculum is that it is descriptive rather than prescriptive, providing guidance and opportunities to support quality teaching for all children across all levels of the school system and in all aspects of learning. Some members of the teaching staff at Beach Drive School were aware of alternative curricula that had been designed for disabled children; however a school-wide decision had been made to teach all children within the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). The formative use of narrative assessment demonstrated the day-to-day successes of disabled children at Beach Drive School within the values, principles and learning areas of the Curriculum. Teamwork, deep knowledge of children, openness, imagination and creativity created space for educators to collaborate and develop meaningful strategies for planning and implementing curriculum goals. School management played an important role in setting expectations around opportunities for learning in a shared curriculum. As a principal, Claire explained how she viewed children with disabilities and their learning in relation to Curriculum expectations and content (Ministry of Education, 2007). Claire said:

It's my expectation as principal that when you have an ORS child in your class, you will have the same high expectations of learning for them as you would from any other child, which is one of our principles that underpins all the work that we do – and meet the needs of that child in the Curriculum just like everyone else. And I mean, I know we've got a team around those children, but when they're in the classroom, my expectation is that they will join in as much as they can ... It's my job as a principal to make that happen. The learning stories really support that.

Claire saw it as her role as school leader to ensure that her staff felt confident to teach all children (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Gabel, 2001; Robinson et al., 2009). Teachers in this research study reported that narrative assessment supported them to make the Curriculum work for all children in their classes. A teacher, Tessa, commented on Hairy Maclary's narrative assessment within the learning area of Physical Education. She said:

A good thing about the learning stories is how the learning outcomes for him directly come from Curriculum objectives so his learning is about his needs but it's also about really being part of the same PE goals as everyone else ... The personal goal of him

being more physically active was just built naturally into the school day. Like collecting the mail involved using a key to unlock the padlock, climbing the steps to the office, communicating with office staff - all useful practical ways of working towards that goal. It's like when the seniors were doing bike safety so you know he had his special bike; he started practising the skills months before the unit started. I nearly fell over the day I saw him biking past my classroom with the biggest smile on his face - I never thought we'd see that ... Making the changes so that he gets to be successful - the learning stories really show that alongside Curriculum goals ...

Formative use of narrative assessment meant Hairy Maclary's belonging in the Curriculum was reinforced as adaptations and differentiations that enabled belonging and learning were made visible. Goals were aligned to Curriculum objectives and teachers collaborated to think creatively about how these could be attained. For Hairy Maclary, these considerations included a modified bike and extra time to learn the skills for pedalling. Collecting mail from the school letterbox met Hairy Maclary's Physical Education curriculum goal of participating in regular physical activity (Appendix three). This also recognised and valued his contributions to the school community, provided purposeful breaks from classroom learning and built physical activity naturally into his learning programme. Educators were clear that Hairy Maclary may not have been the only child to benefit from such adaptations. Thinking about his needs helped teachers to think about ways to support the learning of all children.

Hairy Maclary's parents valued ways in which narrative assessment showed the meaningful learning their son was engaged in at the same time as demonstrating links to the Curriculum. His mum, Anne, said:

When we get his older sister's school reports it's got the Curriculum goal at the top and how she's going with those goals underneath; and with learning stories we get the Curriculum goals for Hairy Maclary, and then the photos and story that tell us how he's tracking ... Of course we know how different his learning looks but to know that teachers see him as fitting those goals, as a parent I like that. I don't want reports that

just tell me he can put his bag on the hook or put his lunchbox away. I like seeing real learning.

Anne's comment shows that meaningful reporting using narrative assessments may differ from norm-based assessments, while still adhering to and being situated within the same Curriculum goals. These are important considerations for educators who are seriously committed to quality teaching and learning for disabled children. In the examples discussed, the use of narrative assessment has provided models of ways to support learning for all children within the shared national Curriculum. Having examples such as these in public forums can also support teacher capability and confidence to teach all children.

Assessment, Teaching and Learning

Teaching, learning and assessment can be thought of as a triangle of interdependence, with each aspect supporting the others. The most important school-based influence on positive outcomes for children is quality teaching (Alton-Lee, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2011b). Assessment that informs teaching and relationships is a key element of quality teaching (Ministry of Education, 2011b; Wiliam, 2011a). In addition to a focus on *how* information about children's learning is collated and interpreted, narrative assessment is concerned with *what* information is collected and *how* it is documented, reported and used. Within the narrative assessment process, teachers use their curricular knowledge and relationships with colleagues, children and families to identify and plan next steps for teaching and learning. Teachers in this research reported that this formative approach to narrative assessment helped them to combine multiple perspectives with their pedagogical knowledge to support children's success across the Learning Areas of the Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). Documenting and reflecting on stories of learning and teaching in action enabled teachers to see the relevance of the Curriculum for children who are often perceived to be not achieving when assessed using standardised norms and measures. One of the teachers, Tessa, said:

This form of assessment (picks up a narrative assessment) gives more of an overall coverage of what the students can do, because you've got a statement that's clearly

related to a specific learning outcome. (Appendix five) Real goals linked to the Curriculum just like everyone else – but you know adapted for her. You’ve got an image that reinforces it, and you’ve got next learning steps. Next learning steps is all we’re interested in. You can only start where the children are at. You can see teaching happening too ... you can actually see how the learning is supported, who might be involved, you get to see facial expressions and relationships sometimes; the things that makes teaching real, and about what happens in the classroom and in the playground and not just about outcomes ... about the actual learning journey ...

Tessa valued the visibility of the Curriculum within narrative assessment, as learning was tracked and reported visually and with written text over time to show the learning steps teachers and children progressed through together towards goals (Bourke & Mentis, 2010; Guerin, 2015; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014; Moore et al., 2008; Morton, 2012). In contrast, most assessment approaches available in primary schools in New Zealand focus on outcomes (New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011).

Multiple forms of literacy

Within the English learning area of the Curriculum, learning strands include listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and presenting (Ministry of Education, 2007). While all strands are important to the development of literacy, there is a growing emphasis in New Zealand education policy and requirements on narrow interpretations of literacy as writing and reading text (Donaldson, 2012; Education Review Office, 2012b, 2012c). Decision making at policy level significantly influences how teachers and children perceive themselves in terms of capability, belonging and confidence. Children whose learning and strengths within the learning area of English not text based, are at greater risk of being marginalised by an over-emphasis on reading and writing (New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011). Within this research, narrative assessments allowed teachers to assess literacy more broadly, challenging their thinking as they recognised children’s success. As both a reading specialist and a new entrant teacher, Margaret recognised literacy in many ways across the English strands of the Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). She said:

When we look at the emergent reading and writing skills for new entrants, I think we are more inclined to notice the little things, but as the children move further up the school we have to assess to a much narrower focus and I think we miss a lot of learning. And the learning stories show that. The (learning) story (about literacy) here with Hairy Maclary flicking through the visuals to find what he wants to say; signing with Bruce in the playground; joining the dance performance; having the picture list at the supermarket; listening to the performers at the magic show; finding cars in the car park based on the number plate - all those things shows skill in English - crossing lots of different areas - but if we didn't have the learning stories we wouldn't have a way of showing that really ... actually if it wasn't for the stories I probably wouldn't have even noticed those things as literacy achievements.

Narrative assessment opened pathways to recognise children's capability within literacy. It ensured that all children had access to the curriculum and disrupted deficit assumptions of incompetence (Biklen & Kliwer, 2006; Florian, 2006; Kliwer, 2008b). The above data demonstrated Hairy Maclary's active participation in reading, listening, speaking, presenting and viewing (Ministry of Education, 2007). Engagement in literacy occurred in the classroom, in the playground and in the community, as learning was co-constructed across settings and over time (Juzwik, 2006; Rogoff, 2003).

Building assessment capability

Teachers being 'assessment capable' is critical to children achieving better learning outcomes and experiencing success (Ministry of Education, 2011b). For teachers, this means confidence in using a range of assessment processes that support teaching and learning for all children. Confidence is enhanced when teachers understand assessment theory, have sound pedagogical knowledge of the purpose and outcomes of assessment tasks and interpret and use information to support ongoing learning and to work collaboratively to this end (Moss et al., 2008; Swaffield, 2011; Torrance, 2014).

Data from this research suggested that teachers felt empowered when they were part of an assessment process that recognised their role as teachers in differentiating curriculum to create meaningful learning goals. Margaret, a junior teacher, talked of narrative

assessments reminding her of “*what’s important for the children*”, and of her increased confidence to “*really teach Jessie*”. Margaret said:

It (narrative assessment) justifies teacher focus on what’s important for the children in their room based on what they can do and where they’re going next. For Jessie it’s that we make real learning area goals in IEPs that are useful and have steps of how we can all head in the same direction. Then we can all teach Jessie with a focus on real learning ... Another thing I quite like about learning stories is a lot of assessment paper work we all have to do is a bit formulaic; but with learning stories you can be creative about how you record the learning, the photos you put in, the work samples, they let Jessie’s personality shine, they have that feel-good factor I think. I can see myself in the stories which is quite nice, and you know everybody gets to see Jessie being successful.

The research data suggested that some teachers equated ‘real learning’ with the Learning Areas of the Curriculum and valued children’s belonging and learning in these areas made visible through narrative assessment (Ministry of Education, 2007). Narrative assessments do not just serve a role as affirmative stories (Bourke & Mentis 2010). To be assessment, they need to provide clear links to curriculum, focus on learning that is occurring and provide information for future teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2009c). The writers of narrative assessments require strong pedagogical knowledge.

Self-assessment

An important aspect of assessment capability focuses on children’s ability to self-assess (Absolum et al., 2009; Ministry of Education, 2011b). As children acquire skills to assess their work, their identity as learners is affirmed and they are able to take active responsibility for some aspects of their programmes and ongoing learning trajectories (Bourke & Mentis, 2013). Although educators in New Zealand may be familiar with these messages, their expectations for disabled students as assessment partners may not be so clear (Guerin, 2015).

All the children in Princess Mia’s class assessed aspects of their own work, using guidelines to help them to identify work they recognised as good quality or as meeting learning objectives. They also identified aspects of their work that they were less happy with, and

were encouraged to discuss their decisions with a teacher or with a classmate. Not only did this affirm learning but supported agency through shared responsibility for current and ongoing learning (Absolum et al., 2009; Bourke & Mentis, 2013; James, 2008). There were many examples where children made comments or recognised achievements within their learning. These occasions occurred naturally within the day-to-day teaching and learning patterns of the classroom. Princess Mia was expected to participate in assessment processes, with her own unique strengths and challenges considered as she learnt alongside her peers.

Princess Mia's self-assessment

During class independent reading time, Princess Mia was reading from her browsing box of personalised photo stories. Some books she returned on completion to her browsing box, some books she left open on her desk. At the end of reading time I approached her and asked her why some books remained open. She told me she was reading and she liked those photographs. The open pages of the four books showed photographs of Princess Mia engaged in different learning activities. I interpreted that she had selected those photographs as examples where she was engaged in school work she enjoyed. I asked which book was her favourite. She looked at all the photographs and, after some time, returned three of the books to her browsing box, leaving the book with the photograph of her in a music workshop open on her desk. She had recently attended a school drumming workshop where this photograph had been taken.



I asked her why she chose that photograph. She said “*the drum. It shakes me*”. I told Princess Mia she had a fantastic sense of rhythm and I could see how hard she was listening and concentrating. She said to me “*Ms Mel likes drumming too*”. She pointed to her left hand and to her teacher Mel’s left hand in the photograph and said “*our hands are the same. We’re jiggling*”. Princess Mia recognised her music skills included keeping a beat and following a pattern alongside her teacher. Princess Mia had been prepared for and was excited at the prospect of attending a drumming workshop with the whole school in the hall. However the reality of the noise and some children not keeping the beat resulted in sensory overload for Princess Mia and she was unable to remain in the hall. With the addition of earplugs and headphones, Princess Mia agreed to try the workshop again and she sat at the back of the hall next to her teacher and near the door where she felt safe. I interpreted that Princess Mia selected this photograph because she recognised she had overcome sensory barriers to participate and to succeed in the music workshop, and that she was aware and was proud of her achievement in music. In this way I could make sense of how Princess Mia was assessing her own efforts in this activity. She identified this activity as important to her. She recognised how her teacher and she shared the same features in their work together. The story also illustrates how the school responded to support her continuing participation in this favoured activity.

Hairy Maclary’s self-assessment

A further example providing insight into students participating in self-assessment involves Hairy Maclary. Over the course of a school week, teacher’s aide Sinead was making a photograph album with Hairy Maclary on his computer. He was able to access all his folders and copy and paste photographs of his choice into the selected computer programme. The photograph album was named “I am awesome – by Hairy Maclary”. Sinead asked him to select photographs of his learning. Of the thirteen photographs he selected, six were of swimming, four involved the computer and his friend Bruce, and three involved cooking. Sinead suggested his best photograph could become the cover for his book, and he selected the photograph below.



Sinead was the photographer at the swimming pool. Sinead asked Hairy Maclary if his mouth was full of water. He did not respond to the question, but pointed at the photograph on the computer screen. She asked him if he chose the photograph because it showed “*how amazing you are doing handstands in the pool?*” Hairy Maclary smiled at her and clapped. Sinead knew Hairy Maclary very well, and interpreted this to mean he identified his success and was proud of his learning. She checked this interpretation with him and he agreed. Hairy Maclary inserted this photograph as the cover page of his computer photograph album. In this example we see Hairy Maclary’s skill in the water. His selection of this photograph is evidence of his learning and indicates awareness that he values interdependence in making visible his skills. Hairy Maclary was able to demonstrate his strengths when shared communication enabled respectful collaboration.

Jessie’s self-assessment

A further example of self-assessment is provided in the following story. Jessie was creating an online instructional reading book by selecting photographs and co-constructing text. The photograph below was chosen from a number Jessie identified when asked to select images she liked.



In conversation about the photograph, Jessie told me she was doing her mihi (Maori introduction/greeting) with her friends in front of the class. She was learning to say 'Kia ora'. I asked her what kia ora meant and she said "*thank you*". Jessie's teacher's aide, Rata always said thank you to Jessie in Maori. Jessie said that her mother, her father, and her cats were proud of her, and when I asked if she was proud of herself she said that she was. She pointed to her mother in the photograph, standing at the back of the classroom and indicated that her mother listened to her mihi. There may have been many reasons for Jessie selecting this photograph including learning to speak in Maori, presenting to the class, being part of a group of friends, knowing her mother was listening and presenting to the teacher. I interpreted from Jessie's choice that she recognised and was proud of her learning. The fact that Jessie chose a photograph with classmates in what was an assessed performance shows Jessie recognised she was a successful learner alongside her peers.

Hairy Maclary, Jessie and Princess Mia were all able to identify positive aspects of their learning when they were supported to communicate and access evidence and artefacts that held meaning (Bourke & Mentis, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2011b; Wiliam, 2011a). The process of self-assessment does not happen in isolation but is interdependent as children are supported to reflect on and make judgments about their learning. An important component of self-assessment is the ability to think about future learning. When talking with the children about ongoing learning goals, photographs were used to indicate areas of learning the children enjoyed and indicated they wanted 'more of'.

Peer assessment

Teachers whose classroom praxis includes peer assessment spend time teaching children about positive feedback, asking meaningful questions and purposeful listening. Peer assessment involves children working together to make judgements about learning and to support each other's ongoing learning. Sometimes children co-construct assessment tasks (Guerin et al., 2013; Robinson et al., 2009). At times, teachers direct and guide children in this collaborative process. The social nature of this formative approach supports a learning community where power is more devolved and distributed within the class, and where children learn to relate responsibly and thoughtfully with their peers (Black & William, 2001; Bourke et al., 2011; Freire, 1992). Children in this research sometimes worked together to create shared accounts of their learning. Bruce talked to me about a PowerPoint that he and Hairy Maclary had co-constructed, showing photographs they selected of activities during their school camp that held meaning for them.

Bruce: Me and Hairy Maclary made a PowerPoint from camp.

Anne-Marie: How did you choose the photos?

Bruce: All Hairy Maclary's camp photos are in his computer. I put my photos in his computer too. We went through them and Mrs Jill said we could choose 10 photos each and make a PowerPoint and show the class ... Hairy Maclary wouldn't let me use the mouse but I pointed to the photos I wanted, and he clicked on them and put them in the PowerPoint ...

Anne-Marie: What was your best photo?

Bruce: Abseiling - it was cool - I was scared but I did it. Hairy Maclary didn't do abseiling but he picked lots of kayak photos. He's good at kayaking. It was funny when he dropped the paddle in the lake and we thought there were eels.

Both Bruce and Hairy Maclary selected photographs showing activities where they experienced personal success at school camp. Co-constructing a PowerPoint meant they could help each other as needed, and ensured a child- rather than teacher-directed process. Sharing of the completed PowerPoint with their peers meant children were able to

comment on each other's learning and be part of a peer assessment process, supporting and consolidating learning (Black & William, 2001). Some of the images selected by Hairy Maclary were later used in the creation of a narrative assessment recording his learning success in Physical Education. In this example, assessment is understood as an ongoing process where current learning is celebrated and the response of peers inform multiple perspectives on that learning.

Assessment and accountability

Calls for school and teacher accountability, measurement of learning outcomes and reporting on student 'achievement' have increased over the past thirty years of neoliberal reforms in education (Crooks, 2011; Millar & Morton, 2007). Teachers have become increasingly accountable for children achieving according to predefined norms-referenced levels and expectations. This has effectively narrowed the assessment lens, with many assessment processes becoming less formative and more summative (Apple, 2007; Codd, 2005b; Crooks, 2011; Nairn et al., 2012; New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011). The espoused intent of increased teacher and school accountability has been to raise assessment capability across all layers of the system (Ministry of Education, 2011b) and to enable success for all (Ministry of Education, 2014).

The Ministry of Education's Position Paper on Assessment (2011b, p. 24) states "when true learning has occurred it will manifest itself in performance." Performance is increasingly measured using an outcomes-driven rubric. Material intended to support 'raising standards' of teaching and learning for all children is silent on processes to make visible the learning of children not attaining predetermined standards (Education Review Office, 2008, 2012a, 2012a, 2015a; New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011).

Accountability can be thought about in terms of observing and assessing where each child has come from, and where their learning is going. This contrasts with a view of accountability as aggregating and ranking large amounts of data and using this to compare children, classes and schools. Assessment used formatively demonstrates accountability for teaching and for learning. An excerpt from Jessie's narrative assessment in the Science Learning Area included below shows curricular differentiation aligned with the relevant

achievement objectives from the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). The narrative assessment included a range of photographs and learning descriptions which showed Jessie participating in practical experiments alongside her peers, observing one of her friends, May who was supported by the teacher to record findings of their science experiment. May then supported Jessie with the recording task and they worked independently alongside each other, colouring their completed recording sheets. Accountability was drawn from the narrative assessment as learning progress was made visible against a Curriculum science objective and an ongoing and purposeful trajectory proposed.

Narrative Assessment – Jessie is a scientist

Learning Area – Science Physical World – Floating and Sinking
<p>Achievement Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore everyday examples of physical phenomena, such as movement, forces, electricity and magnetism, light, sound, waves, and heat (L1) <p>Class Objective: through experience children will identify objects that float and objects that sink in water; and describe some of the physical properties related to the outcomes</p> <p>Key Vocabulary: float, sink, light, heavy, dense, surface area</p> <p>Jessie’s Objective: through experience Jessie will identify objects that float and objects that sink in water; and divide a group of objects according to those properties</p>

Learning descriptions in the narrative assessment included comments about curricular differentiation enabling children’s success; effective teaching strategies; interdependence; the visibility and enactment of curricular values; and clear links to the key competencies and the science learning objectives. Although unstated, an ethic of care is evident within the lesson design, where teaching for all and cooperative learning is visible within the photographs and the assessment text.



Jessie and the members of her science experiment group are exploring properties of objects and talking about floating and sinking. Jessie tests the floating properties of a marble by dropping it from a height, and by gently lowering it into the water. The children take turns and talk together about what they are doing.

Jessie's parents, Fleur and Chris, valued the authentic record of their daughter's meaningful engagement in the learning area of science. They recounted:

Chris: (looking at narrative assessment) I think that's my favourite (narrative assessment above) because it's all quite ordinary and I can see how calm and engrossed she is. It's nice to see her with different kids in the class - I never get to see that sort of thing. As a parent this (narrative assessment) means I can relax and just trust that it's all going smoothly.

Fleur: I really like the story (below) of May helping her (Jessie), I know those two are friends which is just so lovely but sometimes May can be a little bit bossy and I worry that Jessie will be stressed by that. But you know when I looked at that photo and read what was happening, I could see I think that Jessie has asked May for help ... That's just huge for Jessie I didn't know she could do that.



After May has completed her own work, she helps Jessie to complete her activity. They identify whether the pictures of objects belong in the 'sinking' column or the 'floating' column.

For Jessie's parents, accountability for learning was visible in the narrative assessment, as they recognised Jessie's inclusion in classroom programmes and learning engagement with her peers. Fleur and Chris reported feeling confident that their daughter's learning in the area of science was meaningful, authentic and accessible. The narrative assessment accounted for progress, where Jessie had asked for help, a task they were not aware she was capable of. This example demonstrates how important it is to attend to what accountability can mean within assessment processes. Unless educators have shared understandings of this key concept, it is difficult to interrupt historical and taken-for-granted assumptions about how learning occurs and is measured.

Hairy Maclary's parents, Anne and Mike, had clear expectations that their son would learn and that teachers would assess his learning. They commented on the challenges they experienced in relation to accountability for their son's progress.

Mike: Is it (narrative assessment) a valid form of assessment? Yeah? So is it valid to you as a teacher? Whereas to us, as parents, as part of the big picture, it means bugger all. We have no idea where he should be with his learning. He's so rare, no one knows!

Anne: Well ... I think a visual narrative like that is absolutely fine. Certainly the best we could get at this point. We see he's learning – that's the main thing

Mike: I think if this helps the teacher be a better teacher then clearly it is a positive outcome. If it helps Hairy Maclary be a better Hairy Maclary, then I guess we can accept that.

Anne: I mean, like what do we most want to know about Hairy Maclary at school? I want to know that he is achieving, in his way. I don't want National Standards reports, because they're just going to be full of below, below, below. Well that tells me nothing, and when I get those reports (picks up a folder of narrative assessments) and I think if I didn't have the learning stories, I would be a bit sad about his schooling ... But those standard school reports tell me nothing. It tells me what he's failing in - not what he's good at doing. Yeah, the teachers' comments are normally really positive, but all kids and parents like to see results. And that's what the learning stories give me. Yeah, and ... they're all positive. It's what he has achieved and seeing that teachers have plans for teaching him. That's what I like about them.

Hairy Maclary's parents valued having “*snapshots of his school days*”, reading of teaching goals for ongoing learning and seeing ‘*teachers have plans for teaching him*’. Data from this research suggested a formative approach to narrative assessment affirmed teachers teaching and provided accountability, by making children's learning (and teachers' teaching) visible as it was noticed.

Supporting confidence

While assessment accountability requires understanding of purpose and process, and the ability of teachers to explain their assessment decisions, teachers in this research recognised the complexity of teaching children who are part of large teams of support personnel. At times teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork that accompanied the disabled children. The SENCO, Rachel, reported that some teachers lacked confidence in their ability to teach and assess disabled children; and stated that narrative assessment had provided some teachers with confidence and clarity, linking them meaningfully to past learning and ongoing trajectories (Bourke & Mentis, 2010; Lopez & Corcoran, 2014). When Hairy Maclary transitioned to Jill's class, she was concerned that her understanding of pedagogy was inadequate to teach him. Jill said:

I was – I can say now that I was a little bit nervous of Hairy Maclary being in my class, because ... I was quite nervous – not that I didn't think – I was incapable – I just didn't know where to start ... I'd got the folders and things that got passed to me and I was just like Ohhhh, where do you start? I had no idea. I read all the medical stuff and then I read the learning stories, and I didn't worry about reading anything else ... It seems a bit silly now really, but if I can see how he sort of learns, then I can see how I can teach. I've got ways (narrative assessment) to show that we're teaching him, which is reassuring for me and must be reassuring for his parents.

The SENCO and Jessie's teacher, Rachel, understood the complexity and unpredictability of teaching and learning that meant children did not learn in predictable linear pathways, nor did they make even progress within and across the learning areas of the Curriculum (Guerin, 2015). In this way, Rachel recognised narrative assessment as a tool to interrupt traditional expectations of progress as a linear process. She recognised that sometimes learning could be observed, but that it may not be visible again within a predictable timeframe. Rachel stated:

... learning stories can show, actually there's lots of little tiny things going on and lots of those little progressions ... Sometimes Jessie didn't seem to be making a great deal of progress in maths, but at the same time the skills she was developing around literacy were just fantastic ... it is good to capture things because sometimes Jessie would do something, and then we might not see that wee skill again for a while.

Narrative assessment supported teacher pedagogy by celebrating learning as it was noticed, both affirming and supporting ongoing confidence and praxis (Morton & McMenamin, 2011; Smith et al., 2012). As teachers become more confident, they become increasingly assured in their reflexive praxis (Blase & Blase, 1998; Morton, McMenamin, et al., 2012; Schön, 1991). Purposeful reflexivity can be understood as high-level accountability of teaching and learning.

When teachers reflected on accountability for children's learning and for their teaching, they spoke of narrative assessment as a respectful and supportive assessment approach which showed the value of 'working together'. As a junior teacher, Margaret had

transitioned a number of disabled children into school and shared different ways she had worked. Research data suggested that when teachers recognised the relevance of an assessment process, they were better able to account for children's learning. Margaret reflected that:

This (narrative assessment) is a very respectful way of valuing what teachers know about learning. Looking back I had special needs children in my class years ago and I found it really hard ... There were people in and out all the time telling me things; but when I had Jessie it was all so different. Lots of things were different and lots of things were easier. But the biggest difference to me was ... we really worked together. I have to say the learning stories were fantastic. They took the pressure off me because I think it's so wrong to be assessing children like Jessie as below, below, below, below. I was so glad that Claire (principal) could see the value in the learning stories and that was what went home to the parents. How disheartening to parents to be reminded that your child is well below somebody's standard. How does that help learning? ... The learning stories were showing her real learning in the class and in the playground, there is nothing that makes you think 'well below' when you read them. I could see Jessie learning and the learning stories showed it and I know how grateful her family were to see that. She really made huge gains in so many ways with her learning in my room. In so many ways. A big difference for me was seeing myself in the learning stories and seeing myself teaching. I never felt confident teaching special needs children before ... So yeah, the learning stories really helped me as a teacher to focus on the next teaching steps and actually feel like I was teaching these children.

Margaret understood that labelling children as failing did not “*help learning*”, and she valued that narrative assessment enabled her to reconcile her beliefs about assessment with the reality of teaching praxis. Her confidence, pedagogy and identity as a teacher were enhanced as she saw herself ‘teaching in the learning stories’.

Professional development

Relevant professional development was recognised as both pivotal and problematic within this study. The teachers in this research expressed concern that a lack of ongoing

professional support and opportunities for learning challenged their capacity to teach all children well. Increasingly-mandated Ministry of Education reporting requirements threatened their ability to be responsive to specific needs within their classes and to embrace alternative ways of working. Coupled with a lack of responsive professional development options, educators felt as if they were stuck between measures reporting accountability and accounting for progress. Research participants valued the collaborative way they experienced and learned of narrative assessment. They identified that it was important that any new learning in schools was supported at all levels of the system by targeted professional development (Timperley et al., 2007). Margaret and Jill expressed their thoughts about the writing of narrative assessments from a classroom teacher perspective.

Margaret: You know that teachers here really see the value in learning stories, and I guess the more experience you have at writing them the better you're going to get at it ... but you do need support with the practical side but also - sharing and talking about assessment. And also, first you need to look at that child as someone who is capable of learning, and not just be doing a checklist.

...

Jill: I love what the learning stories bring to the classroom, and I know it's your job to write them (Anne-Marie as specialist teacher for Hairy Maclary, Princess Mia and Jessie). But what happens when you leave? We (teachers) all need to know how to do this. Sure you can help us, and of course we'll do them. But if we are the only school around doing this, where's the PD (professional development) to keep us going? What happens when Princess Mia goes to intermediate with all her stories; they've never seen the like before; they'll have no real idea of what it's all about - and that'll be the end of it for her (Princess Mia) - back to assessment that doesn't work! What a shame.

In all aspects of their teaching, Jill and Mel worked together closely and had commented that their praxis improved when they had opportunities for professional development based on critical inquiry and reflection, and where they were able to explore new ideas and new learning collegially (Blase & Blase, 1998; Fullan, 2009; Ministry of Education,

2011b; Robinson et al., 2009). The idea that assessment involved processes that teachers 'have to do' suggested requirements imposed on teachers may not have respected their professional skill, local knowledge and community context. Margaret and Jill's comments also reflect a dilemma for teachers in this project. They wanted narrative assessment to be sustainable. They did not want to rely on one person as the writer of the stories. They liked the approach, but they required support to make sense of how to be able to use and sustain this approach within their work. A further issue for them was the lack of professional development in narrative assessment outside of the research context of this study (Guerin, 2015).

Hairy Maclary's father, Mike, identified challenges around ensuring that crucial information about his son as a learner that was developed over time at Beach Drive School would be transferred and built upon as he moved through the school system (Mara, 2014; Wills et al., 2014). He recognised professional development as critical for all teachers working with his son.

Anne-Marie: Do you have any concerns with this learning stories approach?

Mike: Lack of resourcing! I mean really there should be professional development for the teachers, for all the kids, for all the time you know. They should be building their depth and institutional knowledge while kids are passing through, and that's just been lost. It seems like it's just a case of coping. These learning stories show he's learning. Fine for Hairy Maclary at Beach Drive. What about intermediate? High school? Who'll support the teachers? They need to know this stuff! ... You're never gonna change the narrative if you control no part of it. Training and courses for teachers of Hairy Maclary is so important. He shouldn't be the teacher, be the experiment while people work it out!

While Mike appreciated the assessment practices that showed his son's learning progress and the teaching that supported such, he recognised the importance of increasing teacher knowledge both through initial teacher training and through relevant ongoing professional development.

Using a range of evidence from multiple sources

Effective assessment involves considering a “range of information from multiple sources in order to learn and respond appropriately to improve learning” across all layers of the schooling system (Cowie & Carr, 2003; Crooks, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2011b, p. 12). Multiple sources of evidence collected through formal assessments and informally through conversation, observation, listening, peer and self-assessment enable rich and valid interpretations of learning that are more likely to value the uniqueness of each child (Absolum & Gipps, 2009; Laluevein, 2010; Torrance & Pryor, 2001; Wiliam, 2011a). When teachers include multiple perspectives in assessments, they demonstrate their understanding that learning is unpredictable, complex, multi-dimensional and occurs across a range of environments.

When the role of expert is shared, collaborative relationships are valued, as teachers who work in partnership recognise that individual teaching and learning goals evolve from collective contributions (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010; Williamson et al., 2006). The teacher-researchers in the Narrative Assessment Exemplars project (Ministry of Education, 2010b) described narrative assessment as enabling them to see children and their teaching and relationships ‘through different eyes’ (Carr, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2009c).

Shared collection of evidence supports teaching

Jill (teacher) and Claire (principal) valued data collected by the teacher aides as they worked alongside the children because they often saw learning and participation that the teachers would miss, as the teacher’s aides tended to spend more time with children in the playground and local community contexts. This is not to say they did not value the role of teachers’ pedagogical knowledge, whose input was recognised as pivotal to the assessment process. Teacher’s aides often brought a more intimate knowledge of students’ successes across contexts, especially in lunch and break times outside of classroom learning. Claire commented:

A useful thing about teacher’s aides collecting evidence of learning from all different parts of the day is that it keeps everyone focused on what the goals are. When you’re collecting evidence you keep your eye on the learning and can’t help but support the

goals ... It's teaching based on what kids are really interested in and it makes the Curriculum goals that much more real ...

Jill: Half the stuff he's (Hairy Maclary) doing in these photos I don't see – either it's outside the class or I just miss it. I couldn't believe when I saw the photo of him upside down in the pool... I couldn't collect all this evidence (of learning) – [it] needs to be a team effort.

Because of their pedagogical knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum, it is important that teachers take responsibility for analysing learning in relation to Curriculum objectives (McIlroy, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2007). When all team members understood each child's learning goals, shared responsibility for collecting relevant evidence of progress (work samples, photographs, anecdotes, and comments from children) supported the teacher in writing narrative assessments. As part of her teacher's aide role, Rata collected evidence of children's learning which drew attention to the collaboration and interdependence within teams. Rata said:

Some of the teachers didn't realise the learning that actually happened when we went out in the community or out around the playground or cooking or stuff like that. So coming back and looking at the photos, collecting all that information about her (Jessie's) learning; they didn't know she could use a shopping list and were amazed she could cope with all the noise in a supermarket.

Rata and Jessie enjoyed talking about the photographs of learning together and selecting examples to include in personalised learning books. Jessie's mother, Fleur, valued the opportunities these books provided. Fleur said:

I felt really proud as her Mum when Jessie showed me her book with the photos of her reading in the classroom - just like everyone else. This is the first time she has showed any interest in reading. Rata said she can read about ten words now. She can read so much more in those um ... little books ... We took some on holiday and she was reading them to Nanny in the car. I can see just how positive it is for her The teaching and

the learning stories and her little books it's all just fitting together for us and I think for Jessie too.

Fleur enjoyed reading the assessments that enabled her to see her daughter 'through different eyes' (Ministry of Education, 2010b). This is a critical point for educators to think about in terms of assessment that recognises and responds to learning across contexts. As educators, it can be challenging to be responsible for assessing a wide variety of skills within limited contexts and time constraints. The multiple voices visible in narrative assessment can support richness in information that challenges expectations.

Narrative assessment foregrounds the teaching adaptation and differentiation that enables authentic learning. Hairy Maclary, Jessie and Princess Mia all participated interdependently in classroom communities where success was valued and visible within the daily pedagogy and the narrative assessments.

Summary

This chapter has analysed and discussed research data to show how teaching can be understood as learning. It recognises that teachers are learners alongside the children they teach. Narrative assessments demonstrated a variety of ways that children can participate in and belong in the New Zealand Curriculum. It has recognised that teachers as professionals have the pedagogical skill to adapt and differentiate curricular goals that enable the belonging of all children (Ministry of Education, 2007). Literacy is presented as a learning area where all children can succeed, and reading is shown to be more than decoding text. It is argued that assessment accountability can be thought of as the progress children have made and the possible direction in which their learning could be supported. Narrative assessments supported teacher confidence by making pedagogy visible and attending to the processes and relationships that supported learning. The importance of team collaboration and of professional development to support teacher capability was recognised.

The following questions may support educators as they critically reflect on how they use assessment to support teaching, learning, belonging in the classroom and beyond.

- How do we provide all teachers with the confidence to teach and assess all the children in their classroom?
- How do we support collaborative ways of working across contexts so that a wide range of evidence is valued and used to strengthen authentic assessment?
- How do we support the teaching, learning, and belonging of all children within the New Zealand Curriculum?

Chapter Seven summarises key theoretical ideas from the three findings chapters. It suggests three important messages that inform teacher pedagogy and support authentic belonging of all children within the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). It includes implications for future research and ideas that may support an understanding of assessment that recognises and responds to the capabilities of disabled children.

Chapter 7: The myth of inability

Introduction

Wansart (1995) reminds us that inability is a myth, despite the invisibility and inferred lack of ability of some children whose assessments are absent within some data primary schools in New Zealand are required to collect (Ministry of Education, 2010a). In this concluding chapter, the findings are used to summarise how participants from Beach Drive School community made sense of narrative assessment within a culture capability in this study.

Findings in this research are interpreted from a human rights perspective alongside relevant teaching and assessment theory. This research project was undertaken in an attempt to add to the literature on children's belonging at school. Princess Mia, Hairy Maclary, Jessie, their families, their friends and their teachers, contextualized, experienced and visualized belonging in various ways. Their perspectives have brought richness to understanding inclusive practice within their school community. It is hoped that their experiences and perspectives can inform teaching pedagogy as educators reading this work may reflect on similar scenarios within their own contexts.

Ballard (2013) reminds us that sustainable inclusion may only be achieved within society when the political environment is focused on equity and social justice, and when goals of caring and interdependence become more important than competition and selfishness. The formative use of narrative assessment in this study is aligned to Ballard's description of inclusion as equitable participation and the enactment of children's rights is visible in the narrative assessments of learning.

This chapter revisits the context for this research and the initial research questions. Three key messages from the findings are presented. Each findings chapter is then summarised to identify the main ideas that have emerged from the study. Concepts separately discussed under the heading 'looking backwards, moving forwards', include; expectations, understanding accountability, policy rhetoric, and professional development. This project

continues a focus on research in schools to support inclusive practices. Lessons learned from this project and ideas for future research that may support children's learning are identified.

Recognising a systemic problem

The New Zealand Curriculum details aspirations of children and young people who will “be confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 7). New Zealand's compulsory school curriculum documents view and describe all children as competent and capable, and emphasise that the curriculum is relevant to, and must be meaningful for all children and young people (Ministry of Education, 1996b, 2007, 2008). Schools have the flexibility to develop responsive curriculum that recognises and supports the many strengths and challenges that community members face in their learning together. Many of the participants in the research made strong connections between education, belonging, community, and citizenship. Participants recognised that children's citizenship and belonging is enacted when they are able to access quality teaching and learning within the Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). Paying attention to the interactive dynamics of everyday teaching and learning has been critical in examining assessment and its consequences for educators, children and their families. Notions of collaboration and care have been crucial in this work.

Participants in this, and in earlier research have demonstrated why and how the formative use of narrative assessment and collaborative teaching alongside a view of every child as capable, can be used in New Zealand schools to bring the Curriculum alive in new, authentic, and responsive ways (Guerin, 2015; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2007, 2009c; Picken, 2012; Smith et al., 2012). Narrative assessment can build on and support relationships between school, home and community. It can support the recognition of children's learning and achievements in multiple contexts (Absolum et al., 2009; Carr & Lee, 2012). Narrative assessment can provide direction for teachers wanting to support the meaningful participation and learning of all children (Guerin, 2015; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2009c; Morton, Rietveld, et al., 2012; Picken, 2012).

This project responded to the disconnect between the New Zealand Curriculum vision and some assessment practices for some disabled children. For disabled children, the impact of neoliberal policies places a squeeze on curriculum diversity, and threatens to exclude them from meaningful participation alongside their peers in the rich classroom curriculum. Narrative assessment offers the opportunity to recognise all children as capable learners, as many voices are included and valued – particularly the voices of children as they are woven through curriculum (Guerin, 2015; Guerin et al., 2013; Ministry of Education, 2009c; Morton, McMenamin, et al., 2012). In this way disabled children can be recognised as partners in their own learning.

At a micro level the focus of this research was on how educators, children and families used and made sense of narrative assessment within a primary school in Aotearoa New Zealand. At a macro level, the role narrative assessment can play in supporting authentic teaching, learning, belonging and success for all children in their school communities was investigated. This research focused on the following questions:

1. How can narrative assessment influence our understandings of assessment theory and the consequences of assessment?
2. How can narrative assessment support inclusive practice?
3. How does the narrative assessment process impact on teaching and learning?
4. How do families make sense of narrative assessments about their child?
5. How do children make sense of narrative assessments?

The following discussions consider these questions and how the study made sense of them.

Methodological choice and the broader context

The lenses and theories that shaped the methodological and analytical processes in this research were grounded in DSE, where multiple voices that informed the study could be listened to and knowledge socially constructed by participants in relation to artefacts and to each other (Connor, 2008; Crotty, 1998). Socially just ways of working were valued by all participants, whose commitment to democratic ways of working were evident in their resolve to listen to and respond to children. Critical ethnography was used to bring

marginalised voices to the fore, to unmask discriminatory and repressive practice, and as a means of invoking social consciousness and educational change within broader structures of social power and control (Mills & Morton, 2013; Stinnett, 2012; Thomas, 1993).

Reflexivity was an important part of this research and involved educators actively listening to themselves and each other as they explored assessment pedagogy (Bourke & Mentis, 2010; Rinaldi, 2006). As teachers reflected on the narrative assessment process, they came to see things differently, and to see different things (Morton, 2012).

The formative use of narrative assessment alongside the use of collaborative critical inquiry guided research participants towards enacting a belief in the rights, belonging and capabilities of every person. This offered opportunities for societal structures that might simultaneously empower and disempower, to be explored (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). The belief that changes within education could lead to changes within society was important, as disrupting thinking that aligned disability with deficit was integral to this work. This research respected children as partners in their assessment, therefore the children owned their personalized stories of learning. This challenges traditional approaches to assessment in primary schools in New Zealand where teachers independently record evidence of learning in written form.

The inclusion of visual evidence mostly in the form of photographs, made the narrative assessments accessible and more meaningful for all participants (Bourke & Mentis, 2010; Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012). Visual literacy is an important and valid aspect of learning and communication (Clay, 1977; Kliever, 2008b; Ministry of Education, 2007; Wansart, 1995). Narrative assessments, with a significant visual component may be described as a form of 'visual ethnography' a lens through which understanding and supporting learning, and literacy were explored (Pink, 2012; Rose, 2012). Photographs could be read as visual text, containing messages, sparking memories and providing impetus for new learning and communication (Burles & Thomas, 2014; Simmonds et al., 2015; Skrzypiec, Harvey-Murray, & Krieg, 2013)

Key findings and discussion

Findings in this research project supported the idea that a formative approach to narrative assessment can “challenge the myth of inability” (Wansart, 1995, p. 175). When narrative assessment processes and outcomes recognise the capability and learning of disabled children over time, and inform ongoing teaching and learning within the curriculum; the process, can be recognised as inclusive and enabling. In this study, the uniqueness of every child was visibly valued as knowledgeable voices from a range of contexts contributed to curricular, pedagogical plans that were based on interdependent, caring, respectful relationships.

Listening to children

Pivotal to narrative assessment and the collaborative intent of this work was the inclusion of children’s voices. Educators in this research shared an understanding that without recognition and support for a meaningful way to communicate, children were marginalised in all aspects of their learning, participation and relationships. Having a voice was more than a rights issue, it was about care and respect (Kluth, 2003; Lundy, 2007; Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 2012). Teachers who listen carefully to children and to others who know them well, understand that recognising capability can override assumptions based on a pedagogy of difference. Educators in this research knew that for children to have a voice, it was not necessary that they talk. At times, the children in this research appeared to choose not to respond, and educators came to recognise that silence could be a valid form of communication (Lewis, 2010; Porter, 2014). Princess Mia’s teacher Jill said that a deep knowledge of Princess Mia gave her the confidence to take risks and interpret what silence might mean. Jill recognised that as a learner she often made incorrect interpretations of behaviour, and she felt comfortable to talk about this with Princess Mia, as they learned together, from and with each other.

Key messages

Three significant findings emerged from the data and analysis in response to the research questions. These were:

- The formative use of narrative assessment is an approach that validates the capability and learning potential of every child. When teachers see all children as capable learners; they are more likely to see themselves as teachers of all children.
- Caring, respectful relationships between children, families and educators support authentic belonging in school communities.
- The formative use of narrative assessment supports effective teaching pedagogy, and enables meaningful learning for all children within the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007).

These findings are discussed within summaries of the findings chapters below. Appendix 24 provides a table which summarises the important ideas that emerged from the findings chapters. They are listed alongside questions that may be useful for teacher professional development supporting inclusive assessment pedagogy.

Capable children, confident teachers

Chapter four discussed how the formative use of narrative assessment, alongside critical inquiry, disrupted the idea of attributing deficit with and to disability. It identified how a more democratic, participatory and socially just pedagogy can be achieved for all children through the use of inclusive forms of assessment (Ballard, 2004a; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Slee, 2011). The recognition and visibility of children's strengths evident in narrative assessments, provided useful knowledge and topics of conversation from which to springboard teaching, learning and on-going critical reflection and dialogue (Carr, 2009; Carr & Lee, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Wansart, 1995).

Narrative assessments did not account for learning on the basis of what individual children could achieve in isolation (Carr & Lee, 2012). The learning of Hairy Maclary, Princess Mia and Jessie was supported by a range of people, some who worked closely and some who visited occasionally. For specialists and relieving teachers who connected with the children infrequently, reading narrative assessments enabled them to look beyond the lens of their role, to see the whole child within a sociocultural framework. This kept a holistic and strengths based focus on well-being, identity, teaching and learning (Kliwer, 2008b;

McIlroy & Guerin, 2014; Terzi, 2005). It also enabled team members to have a shared understanding of a child's capabilities, learning goals and the adaptations and differentiations that enabled strengths based learning.

Teachers commented that the complexity of rich information included in narrative assessments helped them to know children more deeply. This supported them to be advocates for the children, seeking ways to maximise opportunities for authentic participation in learning and school life. Teachers spoke of evidence of learning in narrative assessments. They felt that this evidence gave them confidence to challenge inequitable assessment policies and practices that excluded some children. This enabled them to change their practice so that their pedagogy was more responsive to the diversity of children within their classroom (Biklen & Kliever, 2006; Kasa-Hendrickson, 2005; Wansart, 1995). Teachers who look for and celebrate the capability and successes of all children, demonstrate that each child's learning contributes to rich learning for everyone (Skidmore, 2002).

[Relationships at school – “the very heart of teaching”](#)

Ballard (2013b) described inclusion as how we treat each other, and chapter five recognised that the goal of inclusive practice is intrinsically connected to relationships. Tessa described the formative use of narrative assessment as being at “the very heart of teaching” by capturing the essence of children's learning and relationships which she recognised as being central to her practice. While ‘inclusion’ is about everyone, in New Zealand schools this term is generally associated with ‘disability’. The word ‘belonging’ enabled a clear focus on the interdependent and collaborative relationships that supported authentic participation for all children, without a focus on disability. Within this research ‘belonging’ and ‘inclusion’ held the same meanings, and findings revealed an increasing use of the term ‘belonging’. The term ‘belonging’ is preferred, as it enables an uncluttered view of teaching and learning.

Participants in this research described multiple interpretations of belonging. Claire said belonging meant welcoming and supporting all children who wanted to enroll at Beach Drive School. Anne and Mike said their son, Hairy Maclary, belonged at school when they

read narrative assessments that showed him engaged in curricular activities and relating to classmates. Classmates Sasha and Bruce told stories of their engagement with Hairy Maclary and advocated for his belonging as a learner and a friend. Teachers talked of narrative assessment supporting belonging, by making children's learning visible. Teachers Margaret and Jill felt a sense of belonging as their pedagogy was made visible within the narrative assessments. Hairy Maclary, Jessie and Princess Mia recognised their belonging as they identified aspects of their learning they enjoyed and where they achieved success.

Relationships between teachers and children were critical to successful teaching and learning and to children's authentic belonging at school (Alton-Lee, 2003; Macartney, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2007). Narrative assessments placed children at the centre of teaching and learning decisions, by including relationships that enriched learning opportunities alongside children's strengths and interests, culture, experiences and needs, and including their voices in the assessment process (Macartney, 2011; Macfarlane, 2004; McIlroy & Guerin, 2014). Relationships with families created authentic teaching and learning opportunities, as educators welcomed the knowledge that families shared of their children. Families valued the opportunities to work with educators to best support their children's belonging and learning at school. Parents spoke of being reassured that their child was viewed as a capable, full member of the classroom and school. They wanted to know that their child was included by others in class, the playground and in the wider school curriculum. Hairy Maclary's mother, Anne, identified the ability to develop relationships as one of the most important outcomes at school, and she valued narrative assessments that showed her son engaged in reciprocal relationships. Margaret and Jill valued seeing their teaching in the narrative assessments, as it helped them to focus on the relationships that support effective pedagogy.

Caring, professional pedagogy

Quality teaching relies on respectful relationships and caring about children. Authentic belonging is a more likely outcome of schooling when caring relationships and collaborative teaching is prioritised (Alton-Lee, 2003; Ballard, 2004b; Freire, 1998; Monchinski, 2010; Nelson, 2013; Noddings, 1999; Skidmore, 2002). The principal, Claire, said that the personalised co-constructed books showing what made children happy at

school, sent a clear message to Beach Drive School community that caring for children was fundamental to every aspect of schooling. The visibility of caring relationships at school showed the teachers cared about each other, and loved and cared about the children in their classes. Jill said Princess Mia's happiness was a precursor to her learning, and a priority for Jill in her teaching pedagogy. Tessa recognised that openly caring for children invited scrutiny around her professionalism. She maintained the teaching profession is predicated on mutually respectful relationships throughout the school and with families. Beach Drive School community valued a visible ethic of care and a commitment to honest, authentic relationships, and respectful collaboration with family members.

[Narrative assessment supports teaching and learning within the Curriculum](#)

The findings of chapter six suggest ways in which narrative assessment supported teaching and learning. Educators at Beach Drive School recognised that a goal of children learning and achieving independently did not create a learning community within their classrooms, or provide best learning outcomes for children. Teachers recognised that their role was to foster interdependence, strengthened through mutually supportive, collaborative relationships. This meant power structures were significantly devolved as narrative assessments supported teachers to reflect critically on their teaching pedagogy, and to modify their practice as they recognised themselves as learners.

As Beach Drive School's specialist teacher, I had responsibility for writing the narrative assessments. Teachers as professional leaders of learning have the pedagogical skills and theoretical knowledge to analyse learning, and to formalise meaningful learning objectives that support ongoing teaching and learning. Teacher's aides, families, children, and specialists from outside the school such as psychologists support teachers in their assessment role by providing evidence of learning, sharing observations and engaging in collaborative conversations. While many people can provide evidence of progress towards learning goals, it is the teacher's role to write the narrative assessments.

Opportunities for creativity and imagination were recognised and valued within the narrative assessment process (Hipkins, 2011; Hipkins et al., 2014). As teams worked together, they sometimes identified an opportunity to seek specialist information from

outside the school to add skills and knowledge to enable children's success. Collaborative ways of working meant teachers welcomed support to enable better access to learning (Guerin et al., 2013).

Looking backwards, moving forwards

The four sections below present ideas that emerged from all findings chapters. The themes are: raising expectations; understanding accountability; policy rhetoric and marginalized children; and professional development.

Raising expectations

There is a risk of teachers lowering their expectations and limiting curricular opportunities for children when assessment outcomes have labeled them as failing (Black-Hawkins, 2012; Ministry of Education, 2007; Skidmore, 2002; Slee, 2014). Claire had noticed that the expectations of both children and teachers were raised as teaching and learning successes and pathways were made visible through the formative use of narrative assessment.

Margaret commented that narrative assessments gave her information she could use to reflect on her own teaching, as well as supporting her recognition of Jessie as a successful learner. At the same time, the narrative assessments exposed teaching praxis in ways that were both challenging and affirming, encouraged reflexivity and affirmed teachers as leaders of learning for all children in their classes (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Biklen & Kliever, 2006; Skidmore, 2002).

Teachers in this research reported that standardised assessment was increasingly dominating and impacting on their pedagogy, planning and documentation. They reported standardised testing stripped learning of its context and ignored relationships that are central to learning. Teachers felt strongly that assessment tasks should be relevant and contextualised for the children and teachers, and that they should support ongoing teaching and learning.

Understanding accountability

The New Zealand schooling systems remain in the grip of neoliberal policies (Brown, 2014b; Wills, 2014). This means that many of the assessments teachers undertake are

standardised, compulsory, and do not recognise community context or the culture of the school. The narrative assessment process challenges standardisation by enabling creativity and innovation as teachers differentiate curriculum to meet local need. Accountability was provided as children had multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, and narrative assessments could be revisited and interpreted alongside new information. Incorporation of visuals meant all children were able to read their assessments, and this supported them to develop skills of self-assessment, recognise themselves as learners, and share accountability for the learning. Families in this research recognised accountability in narrative assessments when they saw multiple examples of their children engaged in learning aligned with curricular goals and objectives.

Policy rhetoric and marginalized children

New Zealand is a signatory to United Nations Conventions and is fortunate to have legislation that stipulates the rights of all children to quality education. The national New Zealand Curriculum supports the belonging and learning of all children and young people, and positions teachers as learners through critical inquiry. (Ministry of Education, 1996a, 2007; Ministry of Social Development, 2016; New Zealand Government, 1989; United Nations, 1989, 2007; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1994). The intent and language within our legal and policy framework appears to value and support equitable access for all children, including disabled children, to an education that values and recognises their capabilities. However, educational policies and practices, such as the narrow emphasis on standardized testing and results, create barriers for many children and their teachers (New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011; Thrupp & White, 2013).

The Ministry of Education's vision of a "world class inclusive education system" (1996a, p. 5) remains empty rhetoric while a special education system is available for disabled children. Special education can be considered as a response to a regular school system that does not feel capable of meeting the needs of all the children in its communities (Skrtic, 2005; Slee, 2011). A separate system sends a message to children, their families, and educators, that disabled children require a different programme and different ways of teaching (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Morton, 2012; Morton & McMenamin, 2011).

This potentially separates children from their peers and from the rich curriculum of the classroom. A pedagogy of difference legitimizes exclusion of some children. Children will continue to be discriminated against and excluded as long as an alternative special education system relieves the Ministry of Education and schools of their responsibility to meet the learning needs of all children in their local community.

Professional development

The rapid pace of government mandated changes to education can leave educators feeling overwhelmed. Research participants suggested many teachers and schools felt challenged to confidently meet the needs of all their children. Research data showed narrative assessment supported teaching, learning and belonging for all Beach Drive School children, and was welcomed by the community. Teachers were looking for a more responsive and authentic approach to recognising learning, particularly for disabled children whose invisibility was highlighted by the introduction of National Standards (Ministry of Education, 2010a).

Data from this research showed parents and educators considered ongoing professional development was critical to strengthening the narrative assessment process. They stated a need to access timely, targeted knowledgeable support to ensure classroom teachers developed confidence and felt supported; new processes became embedded; and there was opportunity to upskill new staff members. Teachers stated that as they began to share responsibility for writing narrative assessments, their understanding of formative assessment increased; but they required support with writing, and time to discuss, plan, and reflect with team members. Their perspectives were reinforced by recent research that investigates the use of professional development in New Zealand schools. Systemic change is challenged without a commitment to ongoing professional development (Robinson et al., 2009; Timperley & Parr, 2010; Timperley et al., 2007).

Implications for future action and research

While this project focused on assessment to support children's belonging, the data revealed many opportunities for related research.

Although the English learning area of the Curriculum outlines six literacy strands, current assessment practices in New Zealand primary schools increasingly focus on the two strands of reading and writing. This may mean there are missed opportunities for recognizing literacy skills within the current narrow focus. A research project exploring critical literacy within the New Zealand Curriculum in primary schools might support teaching and the recognition of learning across all the literacy strands.

Participants in this research understood the importance of professional development to support new learning, and create systemic change. Research suggests many reasons why people who engage with new learning return to previous ways of working (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008; Timperley et al., 2007). Criteria for delivery of professional development in New Zealand schools is currently undergoing significant change (Ministry of Education, 2016e). Research that supports schools over time as they introduce new ways of working could reveal information about processes and practices that may embed and sustain pedagogical change.

When assessment processes label a child as not achieving, their identity as a learner and their self-esteem is at risk. In New Zealand, research has been carried out investigating the effect of narrative assessment on the identity of learners at secondary school (Guerin, 2015; Picken, 2012). Research in early childhood education has explored the process of children coming to recognise themselves as learners, and the role of learning stories within that process (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012; Macartney, 2011). Research co-constructed with primary school children inquiring into assessment processes and practices and the impact of such on developing learner identity, would align with the vision of the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8).

Since the introduction of National Standards, schools report a narrowing of the curriculum to focus on assessment targets (Thrupp & White, 2013). A research project situated in primary schools to explore the outcome of National Standards testing on the rich diversity of the curriculum and on teacher pedagogy, may provide information for school management as they create local curriculum plans.

Teachers and organisations such as the primary teachers union (New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, 2011, 2017) and the New Zealand Principals Federation (2017) fear an increasing culture of blame when children fail to achieve predetermined levels within assessment practice. The co-constructed nature of teaching and learning suggests teachers become vulnerable in an assessment culture that compares children's performance within and across schools. This situation supports research that investigates the impact of norm referenced assessment on teacher identity.

A collaborative approach that included a range of voices informed this research. A future research project that explores successful partnerships within the school communities and how they support quality teaching and learning, might provide useful insight when models of professional development are being created.

This study showed the importance of teachers feeling confident to teach all children. Professional development that supports teachers to work creatively with curricular goals, and to adapt and differentiate the Learning Areas to enable meaningful teaching and learning for all children within the New Zealand Curriculum is required. This could support the vision of the Curriculum and the promise of Special Education 2000 (Ministry of Education, 1996a, 2007).

Lessons learned from this thesis

As a teacher and a researcher, my personal learning shifted during the research. Initially the project was intended to explore narrative assessment in relation to inclusive practice. I recognised real tension when researching in the area of inclusive practice, as the term is usually associated with disability and with the inclusion of disabled children within education. My focus was on the capability of all children, and on teaching and learning. Disability and inclusion were not the focus as I initially thought. The children at the centre of this research were labelled disabled; however that particular label was not important to the essence of this work. What was important is that the children's access to quality education and to developing their identities as learners was potentially denied by current neoliberal education policy and practice that marginalize the belonging and therefore learning for some children.

This thesis morphed to attend to the belonging of all children at school, and the roles of teachers, families, and curriculum in this process. Narrative assessment remained the lens through which these ideas were explored. There are research opportunities for this concept to be further explored.

During this project, many themes competed for attention. I chose to explore how caring relationships and quality teaching praxis combined to support children's belonging and progress in the learning areas of the Curriculum (2007). This meant teaching and assessment pedagogy was foregrounded. For all the children in this research, the visual component of photographs and symbols meant literacy was a teaching and learning focus.

Figure four below represents the interconnectedness of the conceptual framework and findings within this thesis. There are visible tensions within this diagram. Current government education policies based on neoliberalism impact on schools' ability to design policy and local curriculum that respond to community goals and aspirations. A formative approach to narrative assessment enables the belonging of all children as the vision of the New Zealand Curriculum is realised (Ministry of Education, 2007). When teachers are able to subvert policies and practices that marginalise some children, and instead embrace ways of teaching and learning that enable all children to be active and successful members of their school community; democracy is visibly enacted.

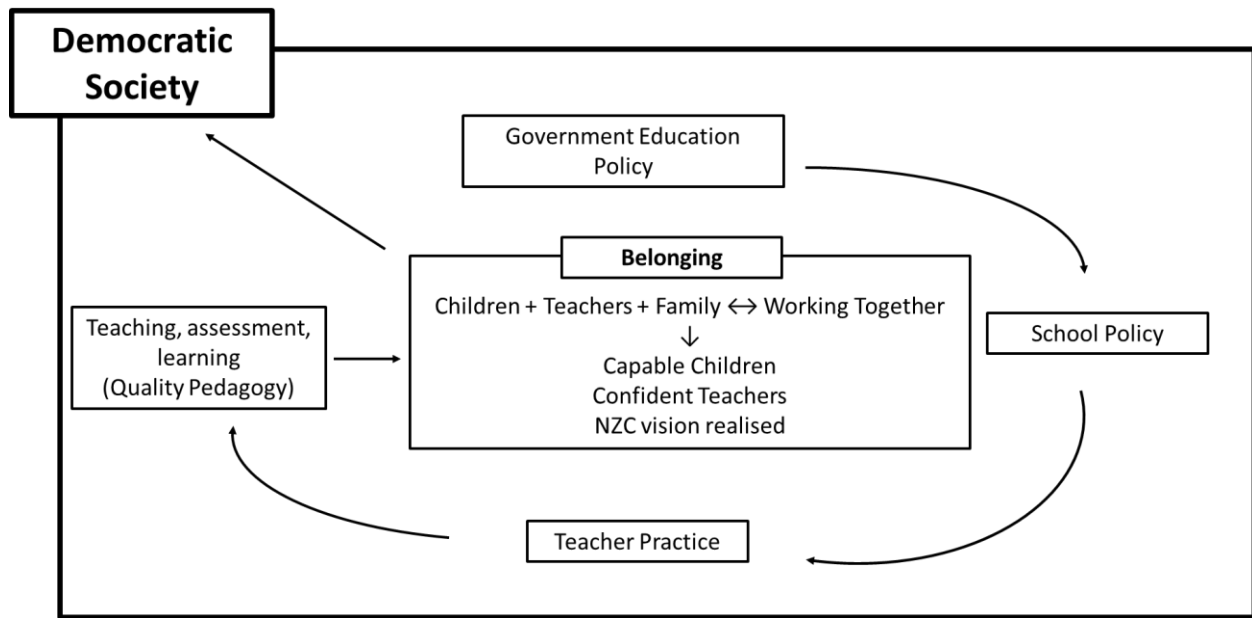


Figure 4: Interconnecting ideas

The disabled children at the centre of this work would be considered to have complex learning needs. Their unique ways of communicating meant I may not have always correctly heard their voices or understood their intent. I have attempted to address this possible misrepresentation by working closely with those who knew the children most intimately – their families.

Within this research, my teacher-researcher role meant boundaries were often blurred. Comments participants made during teaching time were likely to become data that could inform the project. In the busy complexity of classroom activity, my regular presence meant there were multiple opportunities for sharing and discussion. Friendly, collaborative ways of working appeared to support honest, trusting, professional relationships as we connected through praxis. However this collegiality may have prevented participants from sharing material they thought was negative or critical. All aspects of data gathering within this research project were positive.

A number of factors may have contributed to the research participants' positive responses to the narrative assessment process. For disabled children, previous assessments may not have involved them; or the assessment reporting practices may have been inaccessible or invisible to them. For the first time, the children were able to contribute to and read their

assessments. For teachers, current mandated assessment approaches do not demonstrate learning success for children whose progress may be in small steps over a long period of time. While teachers were aware of their children's achievements, they did not have an approach that validated this learning. Narrative assessment recognised the children's learning and made teaching pedagogy visible. For families, a positive approach to assessment was a contrast to reading assessments that included outcomes of National Standards assessments which reinforced children's failures (Donaldson, 2012).

The rich data and findings of this research are deeply connected to the New Zealand Curriculum (2007). Educators may reflect on research findings from this thesis and on the culture of belonging within their school communities. Ethnography creates spaces for teachers to story and reflect on their praxis, and as such provides a methodological research tool that has potential to support teacher professional development.

This research project has wider emancipatory implications. Over many years researchers, educators, and families have worked to create positive change for children, teachers and school communities often within individual schools. Transformative practice required within education will not be achieved in this way. Embedded change will only be attained through systemic, supported and enforceable policy and practice (Macartney, 2014). As a result of this study, I now believe the Ministry of Education is not meeting their responsibilities to disabled children, their families and educators within current policy, rights and conventions (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2014; New Zealand Government, 1989; United Nations, 1989, 2007; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1994). This research calls for a systematic commitment to making sense of inclusive pedagogy in ways that all educators can feel confident and capable of recognizing and responding to the strengths and challenges of learning with and from all children. It suggests that lessons learned from individual settings can support change within broader contexts.

Conclusion

Learning stories show that Jessie is a learner just like everyone else in the class. She can see it, her Mum and Dad can see it, we all share it, we're all part of it. (Margaret, teacher)

This research was a response to assessment practices in some New Zealand primary schools which fail to recognise and value the learning of some disabled children. Limited access to professional development restricts opportunities to learn, examine, and reflect on formative assessment approaches that guide responsive teaching and learning (William, 2011a). Margaret's comment above from chapter four shows that the formative use of narrative assessment can be an authentic approach recognizing and supporting teaching and learning.

Currently, New Zealand's national achievement policies and frameworks contradict the vision, values, principles and democratic pedagogy of the New Zealand Curriculum (2007). A predominance of narrow, summative and standardised assessment practices do not inform teaching praxis, and do not recognise the capabilities of all children. These processes report certain ways of being and marginalise others.

Quality teaching and assessment requires teachers to know every child well (Ministry of Education, 2011b, 2014). Seeking the voices of families and children when creating teaching plans and learning trajectories means teaching pedagogy is more responsive to the capabilities and unlimited learning potential of all children (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Biklen & Kliwer, 2006; Skidmore, 2002). The use of narrative assessment in this study showed there were high expectations for all children to achieve alongside their peers. The process was respectful, accessible, encouraged creativity and risk-taking and was built on children's strengths and abilities (Carr & Lee, 2012). A culture of success was created as children recognised themselves and each other as learners. Teacher confidence was supported as teaching pedagogy made visible children's capability within the narrative assessments, and teachers were able to see themselves as teachers of all children.

The narrative assessment process brought teams together, and recognised children's learning success across contexts with a range of people (Ministry of Education, 2009c;

Morton & McMenamin, 2011; Morton, Rietveld, et al., 2012). A visible ethic of care for children and passion for teaching, helped to create democratic classroom communities built on kindness and respect (Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 2012). Narrative assessment showed that teachers and children were learners together in a school community that valued diverse ways of being. Listening to and including the voices of children within assessment practice, meant all children were supported to develop effective ways to communicate their thinking. Formative assessment approaches supported ongoing teaching and learning within a cycle of inquiry. Narrative assessments showed ways in which teacher reflexivity enabled creative adaptation and differentiation of curricular goals to enable teaching and learning success (McIlroy & Guerin, 2014). As a teacher and writer of narrative assessments, the process demanded I attend to authentic learning and belonging in a collaborative teaching and learning community focused on children and their families.

This research adds to the existing body of knowledge around assessment, quality teaching pedagogy, and the importance of care (Alton-Lee, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2009c; Monchinski, 2010; Morton, 2012; Wiliam, 2011a). It revealed that a formative approach to narrative assessment can transform teaching praxis to enable and account for the learning and belonging of all children within the vision, values, principles and learning areas of the New Zealand Curriculum (Guerin, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2007).

This research listened to the voices of educators, families and children at Beach Drive School to examine the impact of narrative assessment on teaching and learning, and the belonging of Jessie, Princess Mia and Hairy Maclary within the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). This research challenged “the myth of inability” (Wansart, 1995, p. 175), and showed that a formative approach to narrative assessment recognises the capability and learning success of every child, and enables teachers as professional leaders of classroom learning to incorporate the voices of those who know children well in responsive, effective pedagogy.

When all children are recognised as capable and teaching pedagogy supports collaborative, creative, respectful classroom cultures and environments, schools can be democratic, caring learning communities.

Glossary

AAC	augmentative/alternative communication (AAC) is the term used to describe various methods of communication (high-tech and low-tech) that can 'add-on' to speech and are used to support those who have difficulty with ordinary speech.
adaptation	changes to the school and classroom environment, teaching and learning materials, and associated teaching strategies. These changes support children to access and respond to the school and classroom curriculum.
Boardmaker	picture based software used to support and enable communication. Also used to create visual schedules, labels and timetables.
Browsing box	boxes where children keep instructional texts they have used in their guided reading groups, accessed independently to support reading skill development. Children may select instructional readers for their browsing boxes.
BURT	<p>a standardised test designed for children between the ages of 6 and 13 years</p> <p>which measures an aspect of a child's word reading skills, i.e. word recognition. The test card consists of 110 words printed in decreasing size of type and graded in approximate order of difficulty.</p>
Curriculum	the New Zealand Curriculum is a statement of official policy relating to teaching and learning in English-medium New Zealand schools.

curriculum	a classroom curriculum can be described as the teaching and learning that takes place in classrooms and other education settings. At the heart of the classroom curriculum are teachers' decisions based on evidence about children's learning and effective practice.
differentiation	changes to the content of the school and classroom curriculum and expected responses to it. These changes support children to experience success.
DP	the Deputy Principal who usually supports the Principal in providing both strategic and day to day leadership of the school, and assumes the role of acting principal in the absence of the principal.
DSE	Disability Studies in Education (DSE) is a research approach which situates disability within a social and political context and is concerned with the civil and human rights of children with disabilities, including issues of equity, access, and inclusion in educational settings, curricula, and activities.
echolalaic language	echolalia is the repetition of phrases, words or parts of words.
GoTalk	GoTalks are battery powered augmentative/alternative portable communication (AAC) devices used by people who cannot communicate well by speaking. It is programmed through linking to a computer, so the user can "talk" by pressing on a picture to play a message.
IEP	an individual education plan that supplements the full class learning programme, bringing together knowledge and contributions from

the child and those who knows them well, to enrich the child's classroom, school and community experiences and learning success.

Manaakitanga a Maori word that loosely relates to 'hospitality' and in teaching and learning means an ethic of reciprocal and unqualified caring involving head and heart, respect and kindness, a cornerstone of inclusion

multimodal communication the employment of various modes of communication to support receptive and expressive communication such as sign language, AAC, visuals, switching devices, gesture. Can include a range of high tech and low tech devices.

narrative assessment tells the story of learning by capturing context, people, places, and things of relevance; to identify ways in which learning has been noticed, recognised and responded to. A sociocultural formative approach to assessment which values and includes multiple voices and supports ongoing learning goals.

NZC the New Zealand Curriculum is a statement of official policy relating to teaching and learning in English-medium New Zealand schools. Its principal function is to set the direction for children's learning and to provide guidance for schools as they design and review their curriculum

ORS the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) (previously known as ORRS) provides direct support to individual children with the highest needs to enable them to be present, participate and learn. ORS provides support through additional teacher time, specialists, teacher's aide support and a consumables grant.

pedagogy	pedagogy is the act of teaching, incorporating an array of teaching strategies that support curricular engagement, connectedness to others, supportive classroom environments, and adaptation and differentiation implemented across all areas of the Curriculum.
personalised book	a book created for a reader containing meaningful and personal material at the literacy level able to be understood by the child.
running record	a formal assessment tool that helps teachers to identify patterns in a child's reading behaviors. These patterns allow a teacher to see the strategies a child uses to make meaning of individual words and texts as a whole.
school roll	also known as a school register, or an attendance register, it is an official list of children who are present at school. A school attendance register is required to be updated twice daily, either electronically or physically.
SENCO	the Special Education Needs Coordinator who has responsibility for all the children who have special education needs within a school.
social story	Social Stories are a concept devised by Carol Gray in 1991 to support people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to learn and improve their social skills. Social stories model appropriate social interaction by describing a situation with relevant social cues, other's perspectives, and a suggested appropriate response. They are used in classrooms to support children's understanding of social situations.

Storymaker	Storymaker (Geddes Software) is computer software designed specifically for those with learning challenges to focus on teaching language, reading and life skills. They promote verbal as well as written language, and enable language acquisition.
STOS	the Specialist Teacher Outreach Service provides a specialist itinerant teaching service for children on the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) who are enrolled in their local schools.
TA	teacher's aides assist teachers in facilitating children's learning and participation under the guidance of teachers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Background Information on Narrative Assessment for Adult Participants



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Date – October 2011

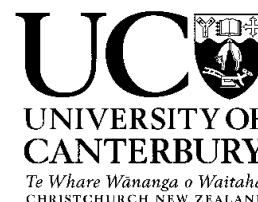
Background Information on Narrative Assessment for Adult Participants

This information will be given to all potential adult participants at the commencement of the project. In relation to school staff, it is envisaged I will present this at staff meetings in consultation with principals. Following this, I will contact parents either in person or by phone and arrange discussion of this information. As I work in the proposed schools weekly and am known to all participants, I will reinforce that I am able to be contacted before or after school any time.

Appendix 1. Background Information on Narrative Assessment for Adult Participants

mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

Date – October, 2011



Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

Background Information on Narrative Assessment for Adult Participants

(This information will be given to all potential adult participants at the commencement of the project. In relation to school staff, it is envisaged I will present this at a staff meeting in consultation with the principal. Following this, I will contact parents either in person or by phone and arrange discussion of this information. As I work in the proposed schools weekly and am known to all participants, I will reinforce that I am able to be contacted before or after school any time)

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching as both student and teacher respond to the information that it provides (New Zealand Curriculum, 2007, p.39).

Assessment must be central to classroom practice, focusing both on what students are learning and on how they learn.

Narrative as an approach to assessment captures and documents learning in authentic contexts. This documented learning is made visible to the writer and to the wider audience of those who are interested in the student's learning. When shared with students, narrative assessments create opportunities to strengthen learning relationships, foster motivation for learning, provide a basis for self-assessment, and lead to collaborative planning of further learning experiences.

Learning stories are an approach to narrative assessment (Carr, M. 2001). Learning stories are designed to combine observation, interpretation, and analysis with possible responses. Learning stories are intended to strengthen a student's identity as a capable and competent learner. Each student's interests, strengths and breakthroughs in learning are highlighted in each learning story. Narrative assessments are a means of personalising learning and celebrating diversity of learning.

Features of narrative assessment

In the context of The New Zealand Curriculum, narrative assessment for learning has particular features that are different from traditional assessment methods.

Narrative assessment recounts learning events within and beyond school settings, going further than simply describing. It tells the story of learning by capturing the context, the people, the places,

Appendix 1. Background Information on Narrative Assessment for Adult Participants and the things of relevance. It identifies the ways in which learning has been noticed, recognised, and responded to (Cowie & Bell, 1999).

Narrative assessment is bound and defined by the time over which learning is noticed by the narrator. Successive narrative assessments may record learning that emerges over time, possibly over days or months (Hatherly & Sands, 2002), taking note of the ways that learning strengthens over time.

Narrative assessment needs to reflect the values, cultures, and ways of being and learning of students and their families or whānau. Narrative assessment needs to be structured, ordered, and presented to be accessible, relevant, and engaging to the learners, family and whānau, and others who contribute to learning and teaching.

Unlike traditional assessment methods, *narrative assessment* makes personal perspectives or interpretations visible and the voice of the storyteller obvious rather than hidden. Narrative assessment may also include the perspectives or voices of the student and his or her family or whānau.

Narrative assessment is respectful of learners and supports the construction of learner identities as capable, competent, able, included, and valued.

Narrative assessment contributes towards closing the gaps between learners and teachers (strengthening power with and power for relationships). It acknowledges uncertainties in the teaching and learning processes.

The format of the learning stories that I have developed and that you will have seen looks like this:

Narrative Assessment – Learning Story

Name-

Title –

Date –

(photograph)	(comment)

Curriculum Area -
Learning Outcome –
Key Competency –
Next Steps for learning –




Appendix 1. Background Information on Narrative Assessment for Adult Participants

References









- Carr, M. (2001). *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings : Learning Stories*. London:Paul Chapman
- Cowie, B. & Bell, B. (1999). "A Model of Formative Assessment in Science, Education".
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- Hatherly, H. & Sands, L. (2002). So What is Different about Learning Stories? *New Zealand Journal of Infant and Toddler Education*, 4(1) p.8-12.
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**Information Booklet: Narrative Assessment for Student Participants
(visual/auditory)**






Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

1.	<p>About our Learning</p>  <p>Jessie Hairy Maclary Princess Mia</p>
2.	<p>Teachers help children learn.</p> 
3.	<p>Anne-Marie writes learning stories about what we learn.</p>  <p>I am a writer. My writing is easy to read.</p>

Appendix 2. Information Book for Children about Project (visual-auditory)

4.	There are photos and writing about my learning.	 <p>I work with my friends. I am helpful.</p>				
5.	Anne-Marie is finding out more about learning stories					
6.	If I want to, I can talk to Anne-Marie about my learning.	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>  </td> <td>  </td> </tr> <tr> <td>I want to talk</td> <td>I don't want to talk</td> </tr> </table>			I want to talk	I don't want to talk
						
I want to talk	I don't want to talk					

Appendix 3. Narrative Assessment: PE Health - Hairy Maclary

Narrative Assessment for IEP	
<p>Name - Hairy Maclary Curriculum Area - Health and Physical Education Date - November 2012 Teacher – Mel Specialist Teacher – Anne-Marie School – Beach Drive School Narrative Assessment – Focus – How the school is supporting the family goal of increasing Hairy Maclary's level of physical activity through a range of motivating experiences.</p>	
<p>Curriculum Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in creative and regular physical activities (L1) • Develop a range of movement skills, using a variety of equipment and play environments (L1) • Participate in a range of games and activities (L1) <p>Learning Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the amount of physical activity Hairy Maclary engages in each day • To increase the range of physical activity experienced 	
 <p>Hairy Maclary signs that he wants to do handstands . He holds his breath under water for around 5-10 seconds.</p>	 <p>Hairy Maclary has a straight body and floats to the side of the pool. He is kicking both legs more often and more effectively.</p>
 <p>Hairy Maclary is helping water the vegetable plants that he helped to buy and plant.</p>	 <p>Hairy Maclary and his classmates have chosen to play with hoops at lunchtime.</p>

Appendix 3. Narrative Assessment: PE Health - Hairy Maclary



Hairy Maclary is turning the pedals. He is biking independently!



Hairy Maclary is signing 'finished'. He is telling us he is ready to get off his bike.



Hairy Maclary is crossing the road as part of his daily neighbourhood walk. He often chooses a buddy to walk with him.



Hairy Maclary and Bruce are off to the slide at lunchtime.



Bruce is suggesting 2 activities that he and Hairy Maclary could do at lunchtime. Hairy Maclary is choosing.



Hairy Maclary enjoys kicking a ball with a group of classmates at playtime.

Appendix 3. Narrative Assessment: PE Health - Hairy Maclary



Hairy Maclary is very relaxed in the kayak. He holds on to the paddle from time to time. He is happy to try a range of activities at camp.



Hairy Maclary is balancing on the log which is swinging on a chain. M (teacher's aide) is helping Hairy Maclary to develop his core strength.



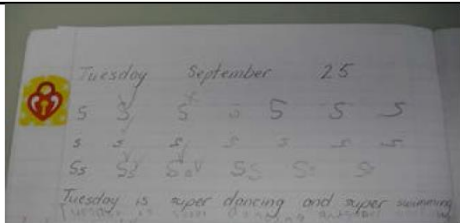
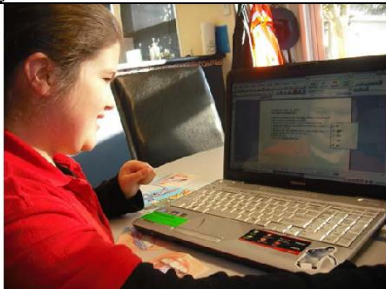

Key Competency:

- Hairy Maclary is now doing a 10-15 minute walk daily. He indicates if he is happy with this idea. Sometimes he refuses to walk but indicates he is happy to do this later. The GoTalk device is useful for Hairy Maclary to indicate how he is feeling (using language, symbols, and text) (relating to others)
- Now the bike is modified, Hairy Maclary understands the purpose of pedals and is doing this successfully and independently (thinking)
- Hairy Maclary is now running a little when kicking a ball and is becoming increasingly active with his peers in the playground. The buddy system works for Hairy Maclary! (relating to others) (managing self)(participating and contributing)
- Hairy Maclary enjoys 10 pin bowling. He is turn taking and counting remaining pins etc. (relating to others) (participating and contributing) (thinking)
- Hairy Maclary really loves swimming. He clearly signs what he likes to work on in the pool. He waits his turn and interacts verbally and by using sign with others in the pool. The pool removes many physical barriers for Hairy Maclary – he is happy and relaxed. (relating to others) (managing self)(participating and contributing)

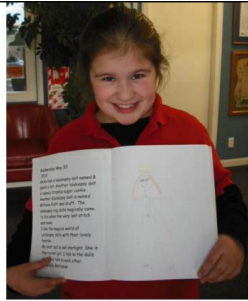
Next Steps for Learning:

- Continue with a block walk (or equivalent length) daily. Would be good if Hairy Maclary could choose when this happens in his day. Include a friend or 2 where possible.
- Access modified PMP activities for a session weekly with a small group. Focus on –
 - Balance
 - Rolling a ball
 - Catching and throwing a ball
 - Striking an object
- Continue to access creative dance
- Continue with swimming programme
- Bike ride twice weekly. Look at biking around the block when Hairy Maclary has developed more confidence with steering and perseverance with pedalling.
- Include some running daily
- Build step climbing (2 or 3 steps) into his daily programme (collecting mail and taking it to the office etc)

Appendix 4. Narrative Assessment: Literacy - Princess Mia

<p>Narrative Assessment for IEP</p> <p>Student – Princess Mia</p> <p>Proposed date of IEP – 4/12/12</p> <p>School – Beach Drive School</p> <p>Teacher – Jill</p> <p>Specialist Teacher – Anne-Marie</p> <p>Curriculum Area - English</p>		
<p>Achievement Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *to select and read texts for enjoyment and personal fulfilment (L1) *to show some understanding of ideas within, across and beyond texts (L2) *to select form and express ideas on a range of topics (L2) *to begin to monitor and self evaluate progress (L1) 		
	 <p>Princess Mia assesses her own printing. She is able to tick good examples and to circle letters and words that she could improve. She is learning to say why she makes these decisions.</p>	
	 <p>Princess Mia is becoming an increasingly independent writer using word-Q. The aural feedback assists with editing and seems to encourage her to keep writing. She enjoys co constructing text. A list of key words helps to keep the writing content ordered.</p> <p>Princess Mia is reading a social story that she has jointly written. She really enjoys sharing her work with her teacher. Princess Mia is learning that it is OK to have doors and windows open sometimes.</p>	

Appendix 4. Narrative Assessment: Literacy - Princess Mia



Princess Mia is learning to save her stories to a pendrive. She is able to select the school photocopier as the printing option. She is writing about her dolls, listing their names and the date she got each doll. She enjoys writing about her interests. Princess Mia looks proud of her great work



Princess Mia is reading her story to the teacher. She reads clearly with great expression.



Princess Mia is reading her collection of narrative assessments. These are written during the year, shared with the team and collated into a booklet. She often chooses to read these during silent reading time.



Princess Mia is reading the book about her trip to the airport. Overcoming her fear of big buildings such as airports and of planes was the first step in being able to have a holiday in Australia. She reads the book, and at the end says "Well done. Give yourself a pat on the back", which she does to herself. She is proud of her achievements. Such books support learning and help Princess Mia to manage new situations and tasks. She took this book with her to Australia, and often read it en route.





Princess Mia enjoys spelling with the class. She is









The teacher is reading a book to the class during feed and read – actually Princess Mia is reading









Appendix 4. Narrative Assessment: Literacy - Princess Mia

<p>working independently and successfully in the class programme and enjoys the routine of this activity. Spelling is a strength.</p>	<p>to the class. She uses a range of character voices and the children enjoy her reading.</p>
 <p>Princess Mia is in the principal's office receiving an award for good writing. She has typed a full stop in the right place without prompting. Princess Mia responds to praise and loves recognition for good work.</p>	 <p>Princess Mia has great skills decoding text. She readily assumes a range of voices for characters in known stories. She can decode at 90 -95% accuracy with texts RR level 18-20. Multi choice questions are useful to assess comprehension. Princess Mia finds it easier to understand nonfiction stories, but loves books about television characters. It is important that books have meaningful pictures to support a storyline. Princess Mia reads pictures in a book first, then revisits the book reading text. She always reads aloud and is learning to use a quiet voice.</p>
<p>Key Competency: Princess Mia has a great memory for words, really enjoys books and reads expressively (using language, symbols and text). Her decoding skills are above her comprehension which is strong in some areas. She finds it difficult to predict events in a story or to sequence ideas. After she makes sense of these using pictures, we will add text. She gets a lot of pleasure from picture books with strong character stories. Princess Mia prefers to write using her computer, and is better able to initiate structured language in a calm, quiet environment. (thinking). She prefers not to wear headphones. She sets up her document in Word Q, types, saves, and prints her work from her pendrive with increasing confidence and independence. (using language, symbols and text) (thinking). Princess Mia enjoys reading her stories to an audience (participating and contributing)</p>	
<p>Next Steps for Learning: *to co-construct a complete sentence orally prior to writing with decreasing levels of scaffolding. Record a few keywords to support sentence structure. * write with minimal input once started and to develop the text logically (visual prompt often good starter) *to increase keyboarding skills through regular practice using a typing programme *stop Princess Mia when she reads a word incorrectly by pointing to the error but not making eye contact with her. Give a maximum of 2 clues for Princess Mia to work out the unknown word then tell her (graphophonic and syntactical cues most effective). *occasionally practice reading 'in your head'. Ask Princess Mia to read a page and then to relay what it is about. Key word prompts may be required to support expressive communication *predict action/response in a story (may need 2 written/visual options to select from at times).</p>	

Appendix 5. Narrative Assessment: Literacy- Jessie

	<p>Narrative Assessment for IEP</p> <p>Student – Jessie Proposed date of IEP – 27/11/12 School – Beach Drive School Teacher – Rachel Specialist Teacher – Anne-Marie Curriculum Area - English</p>	
<p><i>I am a learner at Beach Drive School.</i></p> <p>Current Goal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To match 1:1 when I am reading• To share books in class with my friends <p>Curriculum links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To select and read text for enjoyment and personal fulfilment (L1).• To associate sounds with letter clusters as well as with individual letters (L1)		
		
<p>Jessie uses a visual timetable. She is able to read this and it helps her understand the routines of the day.</p>	<p>Jessie and a classmate are sharing a library book during reading time.</p>	
		
<p>Jessie is working independently on her daybook. Her pencil grip has become much more secure.</p>	<p>Jessie is working on her story writing and printing. She has matched words correctly and is copying over the text.</p>	

Appendix 5. Narrative Assessment: Literacy- Jessie

 <p>Jessie is looking at pictures to help her make sense of the story.</p>	 <p>Jessie is pointing at the words as the book is read to her. She is practising her 1:1 matching.</p>
 <p>Jessie is exploring an interactive book on the computer. She is using her right hand to move the mouse.</p>	 <p>Jessie is playing a game to learn mouse skills. She is using her left hand. At this time she seems predominantly left handed.</p>
 <p>Jessie is reading her story to a friend. She is matching 1:1 carefully and listens when her friend reads to her.</p>	 <p>Jessie is reading one of her personalised photo books with her teacher. Jessie is always happy to share her work.</p>
 <p>Jessie is reading a personalised photo book with the teacher. She is practising pointing and 1:1 matching</p>	 <p>Jessie and a classmate are sharing one of Jessie's photo books in reading time. They read together and talk about the photos</p>

Appendix 5. Narrative Assessment: Literacy- Jessie

Jessie looked at her personalised learning story about reading and I asked her “What is happening here?” She looked at the photos and said:

“I’m good at reading”

“I’m very good wearing my glasses.”

Key Competency:

Jessie is developing a sight vocabulary – 4 words recognised consistently in a range of contexts (thinking; using language, symbols and texts). She is forming more letters correctly (A, a, c, m, l, i, o) , and is more skilled at tracing over shapes and letters (using language, symbols and texts). She is paying more attention to words and knows that pictures link to text. She is beginning to match 1:1 when reading (thinking, using language, symbols and texts).

Next Steps for Learning:

*Jessie is using the computer mouse with both her left and right hand at this time. As her writing is now clearly left dominant, we need to observe Jessie’s patterns of choice although it seems she is becoming more consistently left handed for motor tasks. Perhaps a touch screen will support computer access.

* continue to practise a wide range of fine motor skills daily within the context of the classroom and with peers .

*introduce the software Spell ABC to support and develop sight vocabulary.

*read 1 instructional reader at RRL1-2 and 1 personalised reader per week as well as class reading group work

*encourage 1:1 matching through consistent modelling and computer reinforcement using Storymaker

*teach alphabet knowledge, targeting one letter per week (begin with key letters - M for Mum, D for Dad, C for cat etc) reinforce through tracing letters on her back, sign, symbols, flashcards, paint, singing, writing in sand etc.

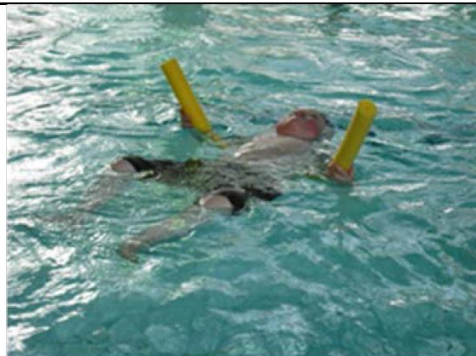
* to read back what she has written with support through modelling.

*to produce text (1-2 short sentences) using a range of supports/methods (word cards, computer, cloze)

I am a Swimmer



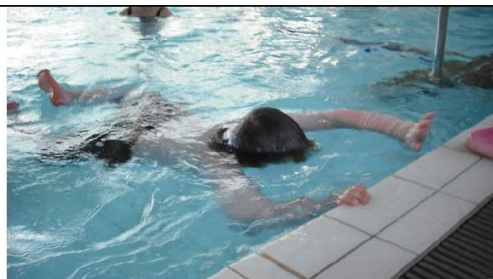
August 2012



I love relaxing on a noodle.



I can hold a board with 2 hands.



I can hold on to the side and stand up.



Splashing is fun.



I love doing handstands in the pool.



I can sit on the bottom of the pool.



I like being with my friends.

Appendix 7. Personalised Narrative: Princess Mia - Airport trip



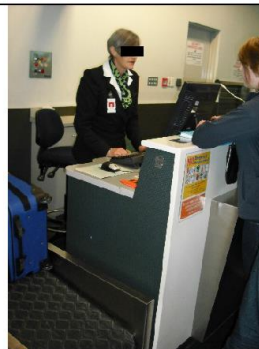
Princess Mia's Airport Adventure
August 29, 2012



Princess Mia pulls a heavy suitcase across the road and into the airport terminal.



Princess Mia lifts the suitcase up so that it can be weighed. If it's too heavy it's not allowed on the plane.



Princess Mia gets to meet Tanya. Tanya checks all the passenger information on the computer.



Princess Mia enjoys going on the escalator. She goes up and down by herself.



This is a small plane. It is going to Wellington. People are walking across the tarmac to get on the plane.

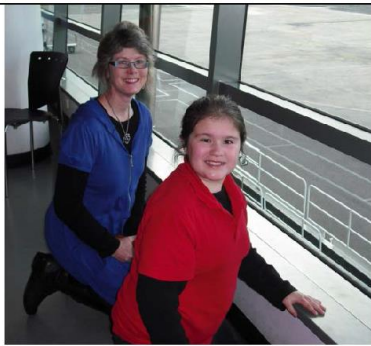
Appendix 7. Personalised Narrative: Princess Mia - Airport trip



This is a big jet. It has just come from Auckland. The air bridge is moving to the plane. The passengers will go through the door of the plane, along the air bridge and into the airport building.



Princess Mia is looking at the notice board. It says what time planes are landing and departing. It says where planes have come from and where they are going.



Princess Mia and Anne-Marie are looking out the window at the jet. It is ready to go back to Auckland.



The jet is ready to taxi down the runway. It will turn around and take off in the same direction as the wind.



Princess Mia is looking at the baggage carousel. This is where bags go when they come off the plane.



This is George. George is taking Princess Mia out to the plane. They walk across the tarmac. Soon the passengers will get on this plane and go to Wellington.

Appendix 7. Personalised Narrative: Princess Mia - Airport trip



Princess Mia is climbing the steps to the plane.



Princess Mia is on the plane.



Princess Mia gets to meet the flight attendant. She looks after people on the plane if they need help.



The flight attendant talks to Princess Mia about wearing seatbelts on a plane.

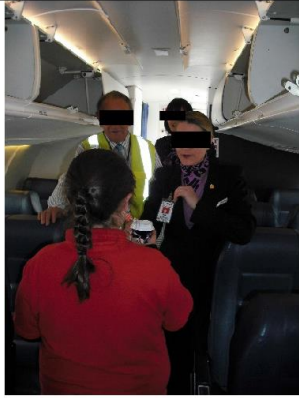


Wow!!! Princess Mia gets to go in the cockpit. She gets to meet the pilot and the co-pilot. She sees hundreds of buttons and lights and switches.



Princess Mia loves being on the plane. This is a very special trip.

Appendix 7. Personalised Narrative: Princess Mia - Airport trip



The flight attendants say "Good bye" to Princess Mia. They give her some lollies and a magazine!!! So lucky.



Princess Mia is on the tarmac. George is talking into the walkie-talkie.



This is the airport fire engine. George calls the fireman and he drives the fire engine over.

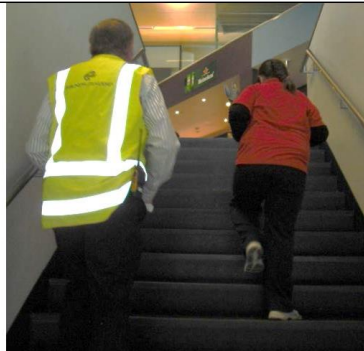


Princess Mia and Anne-Marie get to go for a ride in the fire engine.

Appendix 7. Personalised Narrative: Princess Mia - Airport trip



The fireman squirts water all over the grass. He makes it like a fountain and a waterfall. Princess Mia is very lucky.



George takes Princess Mia back inside the airport. The airport trip is spectacular.

Appendix 8. Personalised Narrative: Reading - Jessie



I am reading.
By Jessie



I am talking.



I am reading.



I am sharing.



We are writing.



We are reading.








I am reading.












We are reading.

Information Booklet: Pretend Names

1.	<p>Pretend Names</p>  <p>We know our names.</p>
2.	<p>Anne-Marie is writing a big story. We are in the story.</p> 
3.	<p>We are telling her about our learning.</p> 
4.	<p>The story will go in a library.</p> 
5.	<p>In the book it will not say where we go to school or what our names are.</p> 

Appendix 9. Information Book for Children re Anonymity (visual-auditory)

6.	Our school will be called Beach Drive School.	Beach Drive School 				
7.	Our teachers are super proud of us but they want to keep our names private. A bit like a secret					
8.	People can read our stories and learn about how clever we are without knowing our names.					
9.	We can choose our names for this story.	<table><tr><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>I know my pretend name.</td><td>I don't know a pretend name. I want help</td></tr></table>			I know my pretend name.	I don't know a pretend name. I want help
						
I know my pretend name.	I don't know a pretend name. I want help					

mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

Date – October 2011

**Background Information on Narrative Assessment for Student Participants
(written)**

Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

*Teachers do assessments to help students learn more and teachers teach better.

*Assessments can be “tests”



* We can use learning stories for assessment. This is a pretend learning story. They can look like this:

Narrative Assessment – Learning Story

Name- Fido

Title – Fido Learns to Dig

Date – August 2011

	Fido is clever. He has found a bone.
	Fido can dig. He is burying his bone.

Curriculum Area – Physical Education

Learning Outcome –

*Fido will learn to dig a hole to bury his bone

Key Competency –

Fido is a very clever dog. He has learned how to dig all by himself (thinking!)

Next Steps for learning –

Fido will learn to dig in the empty garden not near

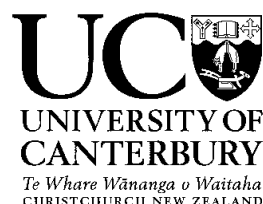
Mum's roses.

(written with a student)

- * We have been using learning stories to celebrate and share learning.
- * Learning stories show the things you are learning.
- * Learning stories can have lots of photos showing all the clever things children are doing.
- * Learning stories can help teachers and children decide what they need to be learning next.
- * I want to find out what you think of the learning stories.
- * I will write learning stories about you and your learning. You will help write some of them.
- * I might print photos of you and write about your learning in them.
- * Sometimes other teachers will give us information for your learning stories.
- * We will talk about the learning stories and about your learning.

mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

Date – October 2011



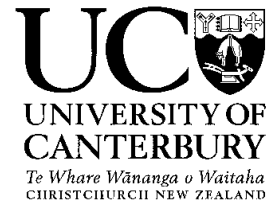
Background Information on Narrative Assessment for Student Participants (visual)

Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

Teachers and children work together to find out how to help children learn.	A cartoon illustration of a teacher sitting on a chair, leaning over a table, and interacting with four children who are sitting on the floor around the table. The teacher is pointing at a drawing on the table, and the children are looking at it with interest.				
Learning stories can show us how children learn.	A cartoon illustration of a young girl with brown hair, wearing a pink shirt, sitting on a small stool and looking at a computer monitor. The monitor shows a simple drawing of a house.				
Learning stories can have photos and writing.	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>A cartoon illustration of a brown dog named Fido, wearing a blue collar, holding a yellow bone in its mouth.</td><td>Fido is clever. He has found a bone.</td></tr> <tr> <td>A cartoon illustration of Fido digging in the ground with his front paws, with a small pile of dirt next to him.</td><td>Fido can dig. He is burying his bone.</td></tr> </table>	A cartoon illustration of a brown dog named Fido, wearing a blue collar, holding a yellow bone in its mouth.	Fido is clever. He has found a bone.	A cartoon illustration of Fido digging in the ground with his front paws, with a small pile of dirt next to him.	Fido can dig. He is burying his bone.
A cartoon illustration of a brown dog named Fido, wearing a blue collar, holding a yellow bone in its mouth.	Fido is clever. He has found a bone.				
A cartoon illustration of Fido digging in the ground with his front paws, with a small pile of dirt next to him.	Fido can dig. He is burying his bone.				
Learning stories show us the good things children are learning. They help us decide new things you can learn.	A simple line drawing of a smiling face with two dots for eyes and a curved line for a mouth. The face is giving a thumbs-up gesture with its right hand.				

mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

Date – October, 2011



Student Information Sheet (aural)

Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

This information will be converted to a visual programme with auditory feedback using Storymaker software and to a visual story (text attached) depending on how the student learns. A copy of the adapted information form will be attached to the completed thesis.

Dear _____

This is to tell you about a project I am doing. Some other teachers, your families and I know that you are learning lots at school. I like writing stories about your learning. We want to find out what people think about the stories.

Your parents, teacher aides, teachers and I will talk to you and to each other about your learning and about the stories. There will be photos of you in the stories. When adults talk to you and about your learning it is because they want to help you learn.

We will talk to you about the learning stories because we think your ideas are important.

You and your parents will sign a form to say that it is okay for you to talk about this. I will use choice cards, sign and writing to check that you understand what I am asking you.

If you change your mind later and don't want to be in the project or do want to be in it, then that's fine. Tell me or one of your teachers. My role as teacher is different from my role as researcher, and whether or not you choose to be part of this project, I will still be teaching at school.

If you have any questions you can ask Mum and Dad, or me, or any of your other teachers.

When I write about your learning I won't use your name or your school's name. We will make up pretend names for you and the other people I write about.

I might print photos of you and write about your learning in the photos.

Thank you for listening.

Anne-Marie



mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

Date – October, 2011

Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

**Information Sheet for Principal / Board of Trustees/Teaching Staff/
Parents.**

I am a teacher working in a number of primary and secondary schools in classrooms supporting students who currently receive ORRS funding. I am currently studying for my PhD at the University of Canterbury. My work will be supervised by Dr Missy Morton (missy.morton@canterbury.ac.nz) of the University of Canterbury. I would like approval to approach staff, students and parents regarding participation in this research.

This research project aims to investigate the role of narrative assessment in supporting inclusive teaching and learning; and on community understanding of the abilities of disabled children. The reality of being disabled and belonging in school communities as successful learners is at the core of this research.

I would like to invite the teaching and management staff supporting the proposed students to participate in this research so we can investigate how this assessment approach affects participants. I would also like to interview the ORRS students and one or two of their peers as identified by their teacher and approved by the parents. School staff involved in supporting the student will be asked if they are willing to participate in a semi structured interview. Parents of the ORRS funded students will also be asked if they would be willing to be involved.

Most interviews will be externally transcribed. A confidentiality agreement will be in place with the transcriber to protect all parties. Data will also be collected through participant use of diaries and through access to school reports, specialist reports, IEP documents, classroom observations and through conversations with Anne-Marie about the student and their learning. Photographs will be frequently taken as a means to demonstrate and record learning. Participation in this research will not impact in any way on teaching time and the interview will be conducted at a time convenient to school staff.

It is envisaged that the participants' reflections of the process may add knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning and the inclusive process.

Please note that participation in this study is voluntary. Research participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If they withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to them, provided this is practically achievable. My role as specialist itinerant teacher is separate from my role as researcher, and whether or not you choose to participate in this research will have no bearing on my work in school.

University of Canterbury Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand. www.canterbury.ac.nz

Appendix 13. Ethics information sheet for adult participants

As part of this assessment, I frequently use photographs as a means to demonstrate learning. The photos include work samples and the student engaging in a range of school activities. All data collected will be treated confidentially as per university guidelines. No students or their school will be named in this research. These photographs may be published in the writing of this thesis and in any possible publications based on such.

I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. All the data will be securely stored in password protected computer files on my personal computer and in locked storage at my house. Copies will also be securely stored by my supervisors at the University of Canterbury. Policy is to hold data for five years after which time it will be destroyed.

All participants will receive a report on the study, and I will be available for the duration of the project to answer any questions.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me or my supervisors (details above). If you have a complaint about the study, you may contact the Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

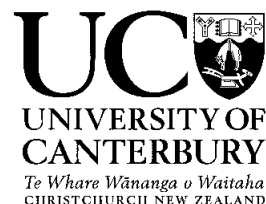
If you agree to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it to me in the envelope provided by [Day/Month].

I am looking forward to working with you to help achieve a collective understanding of the impact of learning stories and I thank you in advance for your time and thoughts.

Anne-Marie McIlroy

mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

Date – October, 2011



Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

Consent Form for Parents, Teachers, SENCOs, Support Staff, and Principals.

(please tick boxes to indicate agreement)

I have been given a full explanation of this project and have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

I understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any stage without penalty.

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify me.

I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the researcher's house and/or the University of Canterbury and will be destroyed after five years.

I understand that photographs of the student will be taken by Anne-Marie as a means of recording learning, and that no individuals or locations will be named.

I agree to the taking and use of photographs in the writing of this thesis. ☐

or

I agree to the taking and use of photographs where the individual is not identifiable. ☐

or

I agree to participation in this research but not to use of photographs in the writing of the thesis. ☐

Appendix 14. Ethics consent form for parents and educators

I agree to photographs demonstrating student learning being used in presentations by

Anne-Marie. ☐

I understand that participation in this research will not impact in any way on teaching time and that the interview will be conducted at a time convenient to me.

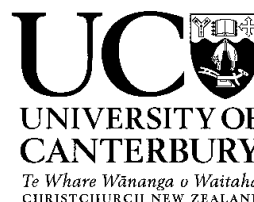
I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study on completion of the project. I have provided my email details below for this.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Anne-Marie McIlroy (mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz). If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature _____ Email: _____

Please return this consent form to Anne-Marie McIlroy in the envelope provided by (date/month).



mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

Date – October, 2011

Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

Information Sheet for Board of Trustees

I am a teacher working in a number of primary and secondary schools in classrooms supporting students who currently receive ORRS funding. I am currently studying for my PhD at the University of Canterbury. My work will be supervised by Dr Missy Morton (missy.morton@canterbury.ac.nz) of the University of Canterbury. I would like approval to approach staff, students and parents regarding participation in this research.

This research project aims to investigate the role of narrative assessment in supporting inclusive teaching and learning; and on community understanding of the abilities of disabled children. The reality of being disabled and belonging in school communities as successful learners is at the core of this research.

I would like to invite the teaching and management staff supporting the proposed students to participate in this research so we can investigate how this assessment approach affects participants. I would also like to interview the ORRS students and one or two of their peers as identified by their teacher and approved by the parents. School staff involved in supporting the student will be asked if they are willing to participate in a semi structured interview. Parents of the ORRS funded students will also be asked if they would be willing to be involved.

Most interviews will be externally transcribed. A confidentiality agreement will be in place with the transcriber to protect all parties. Data will also be collected through participant use of diaries and through access to school reports, specialist reports, IEP documents, classroom observations and through conversations with Anne-Marie about the student and their learning. Photographs will be frequently taken as a means to demonstrate and record learning. Participation in this research will not impact in any way on teaching time and the interview will be conducted at a time convenient to school staff.

It is envisaged that the participants' reflections of the process may add knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning and the inclusive process.

Please note that participation in this study is voluntary. Research participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If they withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to them, provided this is practically achievable. My role as specialist itinerant teacher is separate from my role as researcher, and whether or not you choose to participate in this research will have no bearing on my work in school.

As part of this assessment, I frequently use photographs as a means to demonstrate learning. The

University of Canterbury Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand. www.canterbury.ac.nz

Appendix 15. Ethics information sheet for Board of Trustees
photos include work samples and the student engaging in a range of school activities. All data collected will be treated confidentially as per university guidelines. No students or their school will be named in this research. These photographs may be published in the writing of this thesis and in any possible publications based on such.

I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. I will also take care to ensure school and personnel anonymity in publications of the findings. All the data will be securely stored in password protected computer files on my personal computer and in locked storage at my house. Copies will also be securely stored by my supervisors at the University of Canterbury. Policy is to hold data for five years after which time it will be destroyed.

All participants will receive a report on the study, and I will be available for the duration of the project to answer any questions.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me or my supervisors (details above). If you have a complaint about the study, you may contact the Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it to me in the envelope provided by [Day/Month].

I am looking forward to working with you to help achieve a collective understanding of the impact of learning stories and I thank you in advance for your time and thoughts.

Anne-Marie McIlroy



mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

Date-

The Chairperson,

Board of Trustees

_____ School,

Board of Trustees Consent Form

Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

Researcher: Anne-Marie McIlroy

Participants: _____

We give our consent for the above named staff to participate in this research project while employed as staff members at our school.

We understand that participation in this research project will not impact on the teaching programmes supported by Anne-Marie McIlroy and that research involves a study of the approaches that have been in place in the school for ORRS students for the previous **X** years. The data collection phase will be completed by mid 2012.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

Appendix17. Consent letter Beach Drive School



School

- Living to Learn "

Dunedin

Telephone
Email:
Website:

BLANKET PERMISSION SLIP

The school at times may take photos of children involved in school activities to be used for promotional material and on occasions to be placed on the school website, we ask that you sign the permission slip below and return to school

In order to enable all children to attend trips, cultural events and take part in excursions without having to return a signed form for each event all families are asked to return this one-off blanket permission slip.

The School will always give full written advice about all upcoming trips and events, their costs and any extra requirements.

Thank you.

-----Detach and Return to Office-----

- ☐ We give permission for our child/ren to attend all sanctioned School trips.
- ☐ We give permission for our child/ren's images to be used for promotional material and on the school website.

Child's Name.....

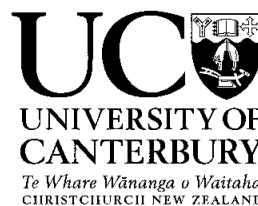
Child's Name.....

Child's Name.....

Signed.....(Parent/Caregiver) Date.....

mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

Date – October, 2011



Principal Consent Form

Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

The Principal,

_____ School,

Researcher: Anne-Marie McIlroy

Participants: _____

I give my consent for the above named staff and students to participate in the above research project.

I understand that the data collection phase of this research project will be over by mid 2012 and that the project will not name participants or my school.

Signed:

Name:















Date:

mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

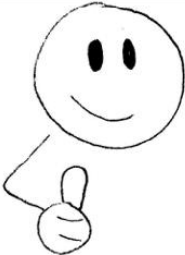







Date –October 2011

Consent Form Narrative Assessment for Student Participants (visual)

Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

<p>I know that teachers work out how to help children learn.</p>		 				
<p>I know that Anne-Marie writes learning stories. Learning stories can have photos and writing.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>  </td> <td> <p>Fido is clever. He has found a bone.</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>  </td> <td> <p>Fido can dig. He is burying his bone.</p> </td> </tr> </table>		<p>Fido is clever. He has found a bone.</p>		<p>Fido can dig. He is burying his bone.</p>	 
	<p>Fido is clever. He has found a bone.</p>					
	<p>Fido can dig. He is burying his bone.</p>					
<p>I know that learning stories show what I am learning at school.</p>		 				

Appendix 19. Ethics consent form for children (visual)

<p>I know that Anne-Marie wants to find out more about learning stories?</p>		 
<p>I can choose if I want to talk to Anne-Marie or not.</p> 	 	
<p>It is OK to say yes.</p>  <p>It is OK to say no.</p> 		

I want to talk to Anne-Marie about learning stories.



I understand what Anne-Marie is asking me.



Appendix 19. Ethics consent form for children (visual)

I can change my mind any time. I can tell Mum or a teacher.



I am happy for Anne-Marie to print photographs of me and write about them



I can choose a new name for myself. In the project my name will

be _____.

I would like to be in the project.

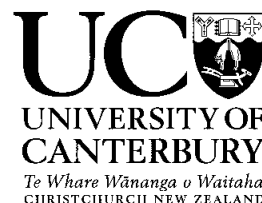
_____ My name

I don't want to be part of this project.

_____ My name

mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

Date – October 2011



Student Consent Form (written/aural)

Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

This information will be converted to a visual programme with auditory feedback using Storymaker software and to a visual story (text attached) depending on how the student learns. A copy of the adapted information form will be attached to the completed thesis.

I have listened to the story or seen the StoryMaker book or picture story about Anne-Marie's project.

I know that:

I can choose if I want to be in the project or not.

Later on I can change my mind if I don't want to be in the project anymore.

I am happy for Anne-Marie to take photographs of me and my work, to print them and to write about what is happening in them. **Yes / No**

I am happy to be in the project but I don't want my photograph printed. **Yes / No**

If something is written about me or there is a photo of me it will not have my name on it, and no one will know it is about me. I can choose a name for myself. I would like to be called

_____.

If I ever have any questions I can ask Anne-Marie, or my teachers or Mum or Dad and they will find answers to my questions.

Anne-Marie will still be one of my teachers even if I don't want to be in the project.

If I cannot sign this form, but want to be in the project Mum or Dad can sign for me or I can use my name stamp.

I would like to be in the project.

_____ **My name**

University of Canterbury Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand. www.canterbury.ac.nz

Appendix 20. Ethics Consent form for children (written-aural)

_____ **Date**

I don't want to be part of this project.

_____ **My name**

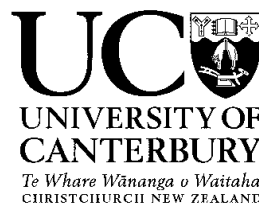
_____ **Date**

_____ **Parent Signature**

_____ **Date**

mcilroy.barnes@clear.net.nz

Date – October, 2011



Parent Consent for Students Form

Transforming Notions of Disability: The Impact of Narrative Assessment.

(please tick boxes to indicate agreement)

My child and I have been given a full explanation of this project and both of us have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that class teachers will be involved in selecting peers who may wish to be involved in this research.

I understand that my child's voluntary participation is sought and that I am representing them through this consent form. I may withdraw my support for my child's participation in this project at any stage without question or penalty.

I understand that as part of this assessment, photographs are frequently taken as a means to demonstrate learning. The photographs include work samples and the student engaging in a range of school activities. All data collected will be treated confidentially as per university guidelines. Students will not be identified. These photographs may be published in the writing of this thesis and in any possible future publications. I understand that any information or opinions my child provides will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify them.

I agree to the taking and use of photographs in the writing of this thesis. ☐

or

I agree to the taking and use of photographs where the individual is not identifiable. ☐

or

I agree to participation in this research but not to use of photographs in the writing of the thesis. ☐

Appendix 21. Ethics - parental consent for children

I agree to photographs demonstrating student learning being used in presentations by

Anne-Marie. ☐

I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked in secure facilities at the researcher's home and/or the University of Canterbury and will be destroyed after five years.

I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study. I have provided my email details below for this.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Anne-Marie McIlroy or her main supervisor (missy.morton@canterbury.ac.nz).

If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).









I agree to my child _____ being able to participate in this project.








Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Email: _____

Book for children explaining research:

This is the explanatory book provided in hard copy and electronic form to support children's understanding of the research so they were better able to think about informed consent.

<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I Can Choose.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I know that teachers work out how to help children learn.</p> 				
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>I know that Anne-Marie writes learning stories. Learning stories can have photos and writing.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>  </td><td> <p>Fido is clever. He has found a bone.</p> </td></tr> <tr> <td>  </td><td> <p>Fido can dig. He is burying his bone.</p> </td></tr> </table>		<p>Fido is clever. He has found a bone.</p>		<p>Fido can dig. He is burying his bone.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">4</p>  <p>I know that learning stories show what I am learning at school.</p>
	<p>Fido is clever. He has found a bone.</p>				
	<p>Fido can dig. He is burying his bone.</p>				

<p>5</p>  <p>I know that Anne-Marie wants to find out more about learning stories.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>I can choose if I want to talk to Anne-Marie or not about my learning stories.</p> <div></div> <div></div>
<p>7</p> <p>It is OK to say yes.</p>  <p>It is OK to say no.</p> 	<p>8</p> <p>I want to talk to Anne-Marie about learning stories.</p> <div></div> <div></div>

9

I understand what Anne-Marie is asking me.



10

I can change my mind any time. I can tell Mum or a teacher.



11

I am happy for Anne-Marie to print photographs of me and write about them.



12

I can choose a new name for myself. In the project my name will be

_____.

13

I would like to be in the
project.

My name

I don't want to be part of
this project.

My name

Appendix 23. Skidmore's pedagogical discourse

Skidmore's Pedagogical Discourse

This table contrasts Skidmore's (2002, p. 120) discourse of deviance with a discourse of inclusion. The ideas in this table are referred to in chapters four to seven of this research.

Two Forms of Pedagogical Discourse		
Dimension	Discourse of Deviance	Discourse of Inclusion
Educability of students	There is a hierarchy of cognitive ability on which students can be placed.	Every student has an open-ended potential for learning.
Explanation of educational failure	The source of difficulties lies in deficits of ability which are attributes of the student.	The source of difficulties in learning lies in insufficiently responsive presentation of the curriculum.
School response	Support for learning should seek to remediate the weakness of individual students.	Support for learning should seek to reform curriculum and develop pedagogy across the school.
Theory of teaching expertise	Expertise in teaching centres in the position of specialist subject knowledge.	Expertise in teaching centres in engendering the active participation of all students in the learning process.
Curriculum model	An alternative curriculum should be provided for the less able.	A common curriculum should be provided for all students.

Skidmore, D. (2002). A theoretical model of pedagogical discourse. *Disability, Culture and Education*, 1(2), 119-131.

Appendix 24. Summary table of research findings.

Table of findings

Questions and Ideas to Support Educators as they make sense of Authentic Assessment for All Children			
What have we learned from this research investigating the use of narrative assessment in a New Zealand primary school?			
Focus idea	Presumption of capability	Relationships that support belonging	Assessment supports teaching and learning
Questions for educators to support authentic assessment praxis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we use assessment to recognise and support ongoing learning? How do we work together as educators alongside families to ensure every child has a voice? Do we have assumptions about capability that impact on expectations we may have for some children? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we work together as educators to place children at the centre of all teaching and learning decisions? How do we understand an ethic of care in relation to assessment? How do we create communities of learning where multiple voices are included in teaching and assessment practices? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we support teacher confidence so they feel capable of teaching and assessing all the children in their classroom? How do we support collaborative ways of working across contexts so that a wide range of evidence is valued and used to strengthen authentic assessment? How do we recognise the creative potential within the New Zealand Curriculum to support the belonging of all children?
Key ideas from findings chapters which support authentic assessment and children's belonging at school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all children are capable of learning all children have unlimited potential children's voice is more than enacting of human rights capability means holding high expectations of learning for all children standardised assessment practices challenge the theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> social justice means we think about morals, ethics, equity and values; about care and shared responsibility to support school communities to enable all members to experience authentic belonging quality teaching begins with care and kindness co-construction of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> authentic assessment drives meaningful teaching shared understanding of goals supports teaching and gathering evidence of learning teachers are learners creativity and imagination support teachers to recognise and support participation in the

Appendix 24. Summary table of research findings.

	<p>and practice of capability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having a voice means having a means to authentic communication • recognising capability begins with knowing the child • many voices contribute to authentic assessment practice • an active voice may at times be silent • meaningful assessment supports children to develop their identity as learners • quality assessment is co-constructed • teachers require courage to challenge assessment processes that limit teachers and children's capability • making children's capability visible, reveals teacher capability • quality teaching involves supporting teachers and children to take risks • all voices are heard and valued in democratic classrooms 	<p>assessment supports development of trusting relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children are at the centre of all teaching and learning decisions • passion for teaching and love of children is a strength • family knowledge of their children is valued • children support each other's belonging • quality teaching depends on quality relationships • learning occurs across settings • power relationships are disrupted by an ethic of care • understanding culture supports belonging • narrative assessment takes account of the sociocultural nature of teaching and learning 	<p>learning areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning is about interdependence • teachers are leaders of learning • meaningful professional development supports teacher confidence • quality assessment can transform teaching praxis • quality assessment is respectful • adaptation and differentiation support belonging • teachers work together to co-construct curriculum • teacher reflexivity supports critical awareness • learning trajectories are visible within quality assessment • the New Zealand Curriculum supports authentic belonging for all children
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Key documents and readings supporting data analysis and structure

- Wansart, W. (1995). Teaching as a way of knowing. Remedial & Special Education, 16(3), 166-177.
- Skidmore, D. (2002). A theoretical model of pedagogical discourse. Disability, Culture and Education, 1(2), 119-131.
- Ministry of Education. (2011). Ministry of Education Position Paper: Assessment. Wellington: Learning Media

Appendix 25. Narrative Assessment Template

Narrative Assessment	
Name - _____ Curriculum Area – _____ (Student photo) Date – _____ School – _____ Year - _____	
Curriculum objectives: • _____	
Specific Learning objectives: • _____	
<div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(Evidence)</div> <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(Description of learning)</div>	<div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(Evidence)</div> <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(Description of learning)</div>
<div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(Evidence)</div> <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(Description of learning)</div>	<div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(Evidence)</div> <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(Description of learning)</div>
-----'s voice: "I -----"	
Progress/Key Competency:	
Next Steps for Learning:	

Appendix 26: Assessment tools in primary schools in New Zealand

Assessment Tools in Primary Schools in New Zealand

This is a list of common standardized assessments/tests that have been used in primary schools for a number of years prior to and since the introduction of National Standards (Ministry of Education, 2010). National standards are excluded from this list.

- Aro Matawai Urunga-ā-Kura (AKA)

This is an assessment tool used by teachers in Māori immersion classes.

- Assessment Resource Bank (ARB)

The Assessment Resource Bank is a large collection of on-line assessment tasks designed to assess learning objectives from Level 2 to Level 5 in science, mathematics and English.

- Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (AsTTle)

asTTle gives teachers information about their students' achievement and progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The tool is specially designed for New Zealand students from Year 4 to Year 12, including those learning in Māori-medium.

- Burt Word Reading Test (BURT)

The Burt Word Reading Test gives teachers a broad estimate of each student's reading level.

- Essential Skill Assessments: Information Skills (ESAs:IS)

ESAs:IS is a set of tests to check how well students can find information in books, graphs and tables, the library, different types of text and reference material

- Junior Oral Language Screening Tool (JOST)

JOST is used to identify students who need further support to develop oral language skills. JOST is used to find out the level of a student's vocabulary development, use of social language and understanding of simple grammar.

- Numeracy Project Assessment (NumPA)

NumPA is a diagnostic assessment tool that gives teachers information about number knowledge and strategies. There is a version of NumPA (Te Poutama Tau) for students in Māori immersion classes.

- Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS)

PIPS is an online based tool which assesses reading and mathematics achievement and progress for Year 1 to Year 6 students. There are also science PIPS for students in Year 6.

Appendix 26: Assessment tools in primary schools in New Zealand

- Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT)

PAT are standardised tests developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). There are PAT for Year 4 to Year 10 students in reading comprehension, reading vocabulary and mathematics. There is a listening comprehension PAT for Year 3 to Year 10 students. Schools use PAT early in the school year. The PAT results provide teachers with information about the student's progress compared to other New Zealand students. PAT results can also be entered into the NZCER website so teachers can compare and print out many different types of reports that show what skills each student has already achieved and what they should learn next.

- Proof Reading Tests of Spelling (PRETOS)

PRETOS are used in some schools to find out how well students can find incorrectly spelt words in a piece of writing.

- Reading Running Records

Running records are regularly used to assess the reading progress of students who are developing confidence with reading fluency.

- School Entry Assessment (SEA)

SEA can be used to collect information on the skills, knowledge and understanding of new entrants. The teacher usually tests children about four to eight weeks after they have started school.

- Six Year Net or Six Year Observation Survey

The six-year observation survey is a comprehensive assessment of each six-year-old child's progress in reading and writing.

- Supplementary Spelling Assessment (SSpA)

The SSpA has two parts and is used mainly for students in Years 4 to 6. The first part tests six different aspects of spelling and can also provide teachers with information about a student's progress compared to other New Zealand students. The second part is designed for students who find spelling difficult. It is used to help teachers find out what skills these students need to develop to help them spell more accurately.

- Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading (STAR)

STAR was developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). It identifies students who need extra help in reading.